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A MAJOR NOVEL BY THE BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF

Leave Her To Heaven

BEN AMES WILLIAMS

SPLENDOR

A MAN'S DRIVE TOWARD THE TOP—THE WOMEN HE LOVED, THE MEN HE USED. "HONEST...COMPASSIONATE"—New York Times

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PART I

THE BOY

I

There was no one to set down the incidents of Henry Beeker's childhood; the record was perpetuated only in the memories of the man himself and in those secondhand recollections of incidents so often related in his hearing that he could not distinguish them from the things he did in fact remember.

But one scene of his babyhood had impressed itself indelibly upon his visual memory. He could, all his life, see as though it were before him, the dark and fire-lit interior of his father's blacksmith shop.

The smithy, on the lower floor of the four story brick building in which he was born and where he lived, was narrow and deep, so that although the double doors to the street were open during business hours, the rear of the place was like a dark grotto where daylight never came. On the day Henry first saw the place, it must have rained, must have been even darker than usual. A fountain of sparks flew upward as his father manipulated the bellows; and Henry's eyes fixed themselves on the extraordinary beauty of these sparks to the exclusion of all else. Strictly speaking, these sparks were doubtless all that he remembered of that first visit to the shop; but in the years that followed he was often there, and his later experiences supplemented the first, adding to that original memory till it seemed to him complete in all detail. He could always afterward see the racks of horseshoe blanks, the heaps of old iron in the corner, the beautiful nails in their grimy wooden box, the brick pedestal of the forge, the palpitating bulk of the sobbing bellows, blowing, catching its breath with a gasp, blowing and blowing again. He could see his father's bare arm gleaming red in the charcoal's glow as he pumped the bellows handle; and he could see the glare reflected on his father's leather apron. He saw his father in this memory as rotund, with a heavy, loose mustache and thinning gray hair; yet the elder Beeker must at that period have been merely stocky and strong, with no mustache at all, and hair thick all over his head.

Henry used to spend much time in the shop as he grew older, dodging back when the horses that came to be shod were uneasy, creeping nearer when they submitted with more docility to his father's handling. The horseshoe nails always pleased his fancy; they were so smooth and sharp, and his father made him rings out of them, beating them into circles around a bar of iron. Henry Beeker had scores of these horseshoe rings when he was a boy; they were much coveted by his friends; and to some extent passed as currency in the world in which Henry moved. It is true that a well made sling shot with new bands was worth half a dozen rings, but that was after Henry had incautiously glutted the market by persuading his father to an over production.

Another of his memories which persisted, extraordinarily vivid, through all his later life, had to do with the outlook from the window of the room in which he was born and where till he was five or six years old he always slept, in a small bed near that of his father and mother. This room was on the second floor of the house, and it had a bay window in front. Directly across the way, a narrow street led up the back side of Beacon Hill at a steep angle. There was a church on the corner; a church with one very lofty steeple, and another less aspiring. Henry, pressing his nose flat against the pane, could just see to the top of the tall spire. Elsewhere, brick walls hemmed in his vision; but he could look up the street across from the house and see to the top of the hill. He liked to watch the horses come down this hill, their shoes striking sparks from the cobbles as they strained back against the harness; he liked to watch them climb, bodies bent low and close to earth, feet flying as their calks slipped on the paving. The door to his father's shop was below his window; when horses went in to be shod their broad backs were just beneath him. It was a source of continual wonder to him that a horse should wear, from this point of view, so different a profile. He had heretofore perceived only length and height; he discovered the existence of a third dimension.

Henry must have spent a great deal of time at this window while he was a baby, and even after he began to walk; it fills his memories of those years. He liked best to be there toward evening, on a rainy day. The streets were at such times slippery, and the horses ascending and descending had more difficulty with their footing. Now and then he saw a horse fall, and heard shouts and watched the swift confusion as the animal floundered on its side. He could never understand why to sit on its head always seemed to soothe the beast and per-

suade it to submit supinely to the process of unharnessing. He liked also to see how the tops of carriages and wagons glistened when they were wet; and he found a perpetual pleasure in observing the passing umbrellas. On rainy days, everyone carried an umbrella; from his viewpoint people became merely a pair of trousered legs, or a long skirt, beneath a black mushroom of wet cloth. He could, in later years, close his eyes and see these passing umbrellas, bobbing awkwardly along, as clearly as though he were at the window again.

So much of his waking life as was not spent in this room was apt to be passed in the kitchen, where his mother prepared the meals, sometimes with the help of his older sisters. His mother pervaded his memories of his babyhood, but obscurely; she was always comfortably there, somewhere in the background, a reassuring presence. But his only visual memory of her was that one in which he saw her frying buckwheat cakes for his father's breakfast. The buckwheat had been set to rise the night before; she beat it, in the great earthen bowl, and poured spoonfuls of it on the griddle, and watched them with an expert eye. She fried three cakes at once, and his father ate them as fast as she could fry them, spreading them thick with butter, floating them in a pool of syrup. After his father was done and gone downstairs, Henry and his sisters ate, more slowly. His mother, in this memory of his, always wore a blue gingham apron with a pocket torn loose; she had caught it on the door knob that morning. Yet Henry remembered her as gray and weary and old, though as a matter of fact, at the time of the torn apron, she was still pretty, with thick brown hair. She did not assume the aspect he remembered till a few years later, during her long illness or just before she died.

His babyhood was for the most part spent indoors. The West End, even at that time, was not well adapted for a playground for very young children. Everyone who could afford to do so kept horses, and the neighborhood was full of stables, which belonged to the houses on the Hill, a few blocks away. The horses were forever going to and fro in the streets. Periodically, a horse car passed, bumping and rocking beneath Henry's window; trucks, drawn by magnificent creatures as broad as they were tall, also went that way. Henry came to know many kinds of horses; in his father's shop, or in the streets, he watched them day by day. Huge draft animals with heavy necks and thick manes; disreputable beasts at the point of starvation whose ribs were conspicuous and whose heads drooped; sleek trotters, the veins in their necks

swollen and their coats glistening, which his father fitted with light racing shoes. As he grew a little older, he was in the shop, in and out among the horses, much of the time. More than once he was knocked down by an oblivious foot as the beasts moved to and fro.

When he was six years old, he began to adventure forth through the open doors into the street; his horizon widened. One afternoon he saw two women, a Negress and a white woman, fighting. Their quarrel was beyond his comprehension; their fury terrified him and he scuttled, squalling, into the shop to hide behind the forge. But he grew bolder, ventured farther. One day his mother came to fetch him to supper, and he was not to be found. She went into the street, to and fro; her first faint concern became alarm, then panic. She enlisted his father's help, and big Dan Beeker, bare-headed, bare-armed, his leather apron flapping, came forth to help her search.

A little after dark, a policeman brought Henry home. He had found the child on Tremont Row, agape with wonder at the beauty of the gas lamps that made the street as light as day. Henry babbled with delight in his experience, but his mother spanked him for running away, and his father cuffed him for frightening his mother. Yet even at the time, he vaguely perceived that their violence was a reaction from relieved concern, and held no grudge against them.

II

At the time his son was born, Dan Beeker was thirty-five years old; his wife two years younger. They were both city bred. Dan Beeker's father had been a stableman; Dan himself liked horses, and became, more by chance than plan, a blacksmith. As soon as he could support a wife, he married Annie Marshman. Their first child was a daughter, whom they named Mary; their second, born while Dan was serving as a private in the Civil War, was also a daughter, Nancy. During the three years of Dan's soldiering, Annie went home to her father's house, and Nancy was born there. Then Dan

came back from the war, and went to work once more, and when Nancy was nine years old, Henry was born.

The Beekers lived, as has been said, on the second floor of a four story brick building in the West End. the street floor was the smithy; the upper stories were occupied by other families. Dan Beeker was able to maintain his family comfortably enough, and did so. It never occurred to Henry as a boy that he lacked anything in the world. In fact, in the matter of rings made from horseshoe nails, he had a distinct advantage over his fellows. Also, there was no one of them whose father engaged himself in such an interesting fashion as Henry's. He had a great admiration for his father's physical strength, and was quite sure that Dan Beeker was stronger than any other man in the world.

His mother made no such impression on the boy as this father of his; Dan Beeker, a figure illumined by the red glare of the forge, was a man about whom legends might grow. Henry's mother was simply the comfortable background of his life, always there when he needed her, always sympathetic with his troubles, always attending to his wants. When, at the time he was seven years old, she became mysteriously ill, and thereafter spent much time abed, it confused him and made him feel the world was all awry.

His sister Mary, who was then just twenty, tried to take his mother's place; but Henry was not satisfied. Henry did not like Mary. She painted impossible flowers on china, and resented it when he lost or wasted her paints or broke her products; she was always rather stern with him, punishing him now and then in a maternal way for crimes which he did not know he had committed. She objected to muddy shoes, to dirty hands; and when he went barefoot she insisted that he wash his feet before going to bed. He thought her a dumpy, unlovely figure and disliked her heartily. His mother's illness was chiefly to be regretted because through it Mary succeeded to a position of dominance in the household.

Henry and Nancy, who was four years younger than Mary, were often leagued together against the elder sister; but Nancy was an uncertain ally. As often as not, when Henry counted upon her backing, he found her joining Mary against him.

Henry's father was confused and bewildered by his wife's entrance into the estate of an invalid. Before that day he had taken life heartily, mirthfully; had eaten and drunk in a robust way, and done his work, and devoured his simple pleas-

ures. Thereafter a certain humility sat upon him; he learned to lower his voice in the house, and Henry missed his booming tones. Henry, also, found his mother depressing company; her room was always darkened, and there was an odor about it which he did not like. When after months that ran into years she died, he regarded the phenomenon with an impersonal interest. His sister Mary, weeping, took him in her arms and said, over and over:

"Don't cry, Henry! Don't cry, Henry! Don't cry!"

He had had no least intention of crying; but Mary's distress frightened him, worked upon him, drove him through a slow crescendo of increasing fright into a tempest of tears during which he kicked and struck and screamed in rebellion against he knew not what. That Mary and his father should soothe, instead of reproving him, frightened him the more. But Nancy took him away with her, into another room, and lay down on a bed and held him in her arms and told him funny things till he was quieted and at last fell asleep.

His mother's funeral interested him enormously; he thought the horses were fine.

About this time, Henry began to remark the occasional presence in the house of a young man named George Nye, who seemed to like to talk to Mary. George, he learned, worked in a department store; the very mystery of this interested Henry, so that he used to watch the young man through the cracks of doors. George attended Mrs. Beeker's funeral, and afterward came home with them. When he had gone, Henry heard Mary remark that George had cheered them all up nicely; but he had not cheered Henry.

Thereafter George continued to come to the house, and Henry disliked him more and more. He asked Nancy one day: "What's he keep coming around here for?"

Nancy adopted a superior tone and told him not to be foolish; but in the face of his earnestness, she giggled and explained that George wanted to marry Mary. Henry asked: "What for?"

"Because he's in love with her," Nancy told him.

"I don't see what for," Henry commented; and Nancy became an offensive older sister again, and reproved him for his churlishness. But still he could not understand.

Mary after Mrs. Beeker's death assumed full control of the household; she was the commander in chief, Nancy was her subordinate. Mary ordered the food, did the cooking, and managed the establishment, while Nancy took Henry in charge. He had long since learned to dress himself; but the

process was still insufferably protracted, and Nancy used to drive him by word and action, seeking in vain to teach him to make haste. She was herself as quick as light; and his slowness must have been, he perceived years later, a torment to her. At the time, he considered that he was the tormented one. He used to feel that he hated Mary, and usually he did not like Nancy, and he was awed and afraid of his father; so he spent more and more time abroad. School had emancipated him, enlarging his horizon. The school building was two blocks away, and after the first few days, he went to and fro alone. At first he saw himself there as a solitary outlander in the midst of scores and hundreds of strange children who jeered at him; but in a little while he drew into a group with the boys of his own age, and assumed his place in society.

The city, which had been at first for him merely a house with a street outside where people passed beneath umbrellas, widened into a neighborhood when he began to go to school; and after a year or two its boundaries were further extended. One day, with three of his fellows, he made his way down among the wharves and saw swearing men loading bales of stuff into a great ship by means of slings. The sight fascinated him and filled him with awe; he watched from the dock side with wide eyes. About the same time he first went swimming in the Harbor, and was almost drowned; but the next year he learned to swim, and then to dive from the piles above the water.

The year that he was nine years old—this was the year his mother died—he and two other boys went in early June as far from home as Beacon Street, to watch a new house being built there; and he saw for the first time the Common and the Public Garden, and plucked a flower which took his fancy, so that a policeman shook him roughly by the shoulder and admonished him against such crimes. When the policeman released him, Henry took to his heels, his heart pounding; and he did not stop running until he saw familiar streets and alleys about him, felt familiar cobbles beneath his feet again.

That fall he had a fight with his friend Sam Russell, a boy about his own age, but somewhat larger than he. It was on the way home from school; and there had fallen a light rain. The boys began to stamp in the puddles on the paving, thus splashing muddy water upon each other's garments. Henry took to this sport hilariously; and so successfully that he cast a fleck of mud upon the white shirt which Sam wore. Sam had been bidden, on penalty of a whipping, to keep that shirt

clean; he wept with anger, and smote Henry upon the head, behind the ear, with his fist. Henry gaped at him in astonishment. Sam hit him in the stomach so that Henry could not breathe, and then in the face, and then upon the head again, swinging widely. Henry, imitating the other's motions, hit Sam upon the back of the head; but he found this hurt his thumb more than Sam's blows hurt his body, so he submitted, thereafter, to the chastisement. The other boys jeered at him because he did not fight; called him baby, and said he was afraid. But he was not afraid, he was only confused and uncertain and uncomfortable. It did not occur to him to run away, and Sam eventually tired of hitting him. He and Sam were really good friends; and that afternoon placatingly, he gave Sam three rings made from horseshoe nails.

The winter after his mother died, Nancy fell, on the ice, bruising her hip and crushing a bone there. An unskilful doctor attended her. When she was again able to walk, she limped, and the limp persisted. She lost weight. Henry became, for the first time, familiar with the word "consumption," usually spoken in a whisper, and in a tone of dread. When Nancy died, he was old enough to understand; the dull ache of longing for his mother—which he felt without knowing what it was—had just begun to pass away, and Nancy's death woke it and intensified it. He and she had been very close to one another; his father and his sister Mary were by comparison immeasureably remote. He felt utterly alone in an unfriendly world, and wept for almost an hour.

Then George Nye came to the house and brought him a wooden wagon with four wheels, all painted red. Henry perceived new virtues in George, and consoled himself with the wagon, and took it to show Sam Russell. He found that the fact that his sister was dead made him somewhat of a hero in Sam's eyes, and this almost reconciled him to his loss. He rather enjoyed playing the heroic role in the succeeding hours.

Nevertheless, when life settled into routine again, Henry missed Nancy very much indeed. He was just past ten years old.

2

Henry's world at this time was to a great extent limited to half a dozen individuals. The foremost among these, he would have said, was Sam Russell, and except when school held him prisoner he and Sam were inseparable. This friend-

ship, though their actual contacts were later interrupted for months and even for years at a time and at last ceased altogether, persisted through his life. He always spoke of Sam as "the oldest friend I've got."

Next to Sam came his father and Mary. His father partook of the character of a policeman. He was a potential threat; and Mary used to invoke him, at crucial moments, like an avenging deity. Henry hated Mary for doing this; but curiously enough he did not resent his father's response to her summons. It was, he vaguely felt, the sort of thing one expected from fathers. He had even at times a feeling of superiority to his father, as though by applying the bit of broken board, or the shingle, or the flat of a horny hand as the case might be, the older man had demeaned himself, reduced himself to a status below Henry's own. This feeling on Henry's part no doubt arose from the fact that he felt himself unjustly punished. His father never inquired into the rights and wrongs of an incident; if Mary complained, his father whipped. That was all. Henry felt that Mary was stupid and malignant, but he never blamed his father.

At home also he saw George Nye. George came with some regularity, to help Mary with the dishes and walk out with her afterwards; or if the evenings were bad, to sit and talk in a desultory fashion. Henry, observing them, thought the proceedings dull; the comments of his school mates taught him to see in them something clandestine and mean, but he thought that if they were mean, they were also uninteresting. George seemed to him a slow young man with a distorted sense of humor, already slightly bald, and never so ridiculous as when he tried to meet Henry on equal terms. He liked rather better a young man named Ben Harris, whom George once or twice brought to the house. George and Ben Harris lived together, in a room a few blocks away. Ben was a reporter on the *Tribune*, and a livelier young man than George. He smoked, whereas George had no vices at all. Furthermore he had a way of talking about people, and telling stories that made Henry laugh. There was a sophistication about Ben, a certain optimistic cynicism, as though he were forever saying: "The world is a world of hypocrites; but they're pretty good fellows, just the same." Ben had been on the *Tribune* three years and had opinions upon the profession of journalism. He used to talk to old Dan Beeker by the hour, busy with prophecy.

"These old men that are running the papers in this town now are too slow," he would tell Dan earnestly. "Yes, sir.

You're going to see a big change in things, before so very long. They'll use a bigger type, so people can read what they print; and they'll print stuff people want to read, instead of a lot of stuff they ought to want to read." He had a copy of the *Advertiser* in his hand and struck at it scornfully. "Look at that front page. Four stories about fall festivals and cattle shows. Pretty near a column telling 'How the Hog Crop is Gathered.' Professor Edward H. Hipple lectures at Tremont Temple on The Future of America. Eleven bankruptcies in New England. A reunion and sociable at the Prospect Hill church in Somerville. An Exhibition of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. And away down here in the corner a paragraph about Captain McDonohay of the New York Police on trial for blackmailing a woman for keeping a house."

He struck this last item again. "There's the news for you. Bring that story up in big type, with a big headline and you'd sell all the papers you could print. I've told 'em so, on the *Tribune*, too," he concluded defiantly. "But they think they know."

Henry listend to Ben Harris with intent and eager eyes. It seemed to him he had never seen a man who knew so much. Henry had never before this time paid much attention to newspapers; but hereafter, when it rained so that he could not go out of doors, he sometimes looked at them. He found them, on the whole, deadly dull; but now and then, far down in a corner or hidden away on an inside page, he came upon a paragraph or two of fire, murder, shame or sudden death which quickened his imagination, made him wonder.

This interest faded before a keener one. George Nye and Ben Harris between them bought a bicycle. Henry had seen one or two of these machines before, but always at a distance, conscious that they were remote from his life and must always remain so. Now George and Ben not only owned one, they rode it in the street before the Beeker home. Perched high in the air above the big front wheel they seemed to fly; their frequent falls in no wise appalled Henry. He demanded that he be permitted to ride, and in the end sufficiently mastered the instrument so that he progressed for almost half a block before disaster came. His fall bloodied his nose; and Ben Harris, wiping away the gore, warned him.

"When you feel yourself going," he advised, "you want to stick out your chest, and turn your face to one side. Then it'll just knock the wind out of you."

"I want to do it again," Henry demanded. It had not occurred to him to cry at his hurt. Ben applauded his deter-

mination, but Mary, who had seen the catastrophe from her window, appeared at this juncture, and Henry rode no more that day.

It was astonishing what a difference he now perceived in George Nye. George in himself was a person of small account; but George as the half owner of a bicycle was one to be admired and cultivated. Ben Harris shared this glamor, and Henry used to watch him and imitate him in gesture and in word.

There was another aspect of his life at this period which deserves to be recorded. He went every Sunday to Sunday school across the street; and there it was discovered that he had a sweet boy's soprano. This discovery brought torment in its train; he was made to sing in choruses, and once, with Mary as a monitor close by, he sang a solo. Mary told him he might become a great singer; she discovered that he was trying to learn to smoke like Ben Harris, and made life a burden thereafter by her espionage to prevent this vicious practice. Somewhere in Mary there was a love of beauty, a yearning for artistic creation; it had manifested itself in her work with paint and china; it turned now toward Henry, concentrating on him. She planned enormous sacrifices in order that he might cultivate this voice of his. Henry's anguish was only ended when his voice changed and so completely lost its sweetness that even Mary was compelled to give over her ambitions for him. She attributed the catastrophe to tobacco, and reminded him of what the vice had cost him at every opportunity so long as she lived.

One comfort remained to him in connection with this singing; it won for him a certain amount of personal attention from his Sunday school teacher, with whom he was deeply in love. Dumb in her presence, pulseless and ill whenever she looked at him, he nevertheless sought occasion to be near her; and when she married a plumber, Henry felt as though the world was hardly worth inhabiting. It is true the plumber was well to do; you could read his advertisements in the *Transcript,* in which he spoke openly of his wares as "a delightful luxury, if not an absolute necessity." But Henry thought this open speech an indelicacy, and wondered what she could discover in such a man. This reflection, convincing him she was unworthy of his own love, gave him some comfort in the end.

When Henry was thirteen years old, a fractious horse kicked Dan Beeker on the elbow, shattering the bones. It was his right elbow; and the joint was stiff when it healed, so that

Dan's working abilities were impaired. During his disability he hired a young man to take care of the shop; he retained this helper after his own return to that cavernous place. But the helper's hire curtailed the family income; and for the first time in his life, Henry began to be conscious of the restrictions which lack of money sometimes imposes.

In this emergency, Mary tried to resume her china painting. It was pleasant but not lucrative. She cooked cakes and pies for a nearby restaurant, but the work was hard and the profit small. Their family savings dwindled to the vanishing point; and they began to owe money here and there. In the early summer of Henry's fifteenth year, when three months of vacation opened out ahead of him, Mary was driven to suggest that he might find work, augment by his labors the family income. It would be only for the summer. He must go back to school in the fall. But in the meanwhile, there were three months of his time free for lucrative employment.

Henry himself rather welcomed the idea; it gave him a pleasant feeling of maturity. The only difficulty was to find work that he could do. But when George Nye and Ben Harris were called in consultation, Ben at once solved the problem.

"He can get a job as office boy in the *Tribune* office," he declared. "The boys are always coming and going there."

The newspaper, as personified in Ben Harris, had already laid its hold on Henry; this prospect now delighted him.

III

Henry's first day in the office of the *Tribune* was for him forever memorable. The smell of the place, combined of dust, ink, stale tobacco smoke, damp floors, gas and insecticide, impressed itself upon his nostrils. The turbulence of the city room, full of voices and scraping chairs and hurrying feet and the click of the telegraph instruments, delighted as much as it confused him, and the very gloom and darkness, broken here and there by flickering gas flames, had a mysterious charm. The office satisfied something in him which is in every boy; there was an air of hustle, of importance, of busy con-

fusion which he found immensely gratifying, and his devotion was instant and complete.

Ben Harris was his guide on this first occasion. Henry had known only vaguely where the *Tribune* office lay. His orbit, his world up to this time, had been bounded by Beacon Street, the River, the water front, and, say, Washington Street. The *Tribune* office was on Washington Street, in the fringes of the territory which he had explored. Ben had suggested that Henry meet him at the *Tribune* office; but the boy was suddenly overcome by diffidence and vague fears, and in the end Ben agreed to come Monday morning and fetch him.

Henry always remembered the hours before Ben came with a persisting horror. Mary insisted, in view of the importance of the occasion, on overseeing his toilet. He had somehow eluded the bathtub on the previous Saturday night; supposed that she had overlooked this fact. But Monday morning Mary announced that he must have a bath, and proceeded to inflict these ablutions herself, in a wooden wash tub on the kitchen floor. For the boy this was acutest torture; his outraged modesty almost drove him insane, and only the intervention of Dan Beeker himself enabled Mary to carry through her project. Henry's father made no threats; he simply came to the doorway of the kitchen and said mildly:

"Henry, you do what Mary tells you."

And Henry did. Awe of his father and fear of his father were still part of Henry's very soul; he was on the threshold of a new estate of something like equality with Dan Beeker, but he had not yet entered in.

So Mary bathed him, scrubbing him painfully. She cut his finger nails to the quick; and she trimmed his hair here and there with her dull scissors in a vain effort to make it lie smooth. Henry had not yet reached the age where he paid heed to his appearance; he had had an interval of slicking his hair down with oil and a heavy brush, but that was during the reign of his Sunday school teacher in his heart. With her faithlessness, he had lost interest in his hair, and Mary's attentions failed to make much impression upon its riotous lack of discipline. Mary dressed him or supervised his dressing; she made sure that his clothes were well brushed, that his shirt was clean. When she was done, Henry was like a boy in a plaster cast. His garments were in no sense a part of him; they were applied externally only, and you could visualize the boy himself, fettered within them, fretting against them with a hopeless futility.

Then she made him sit on a chair in the sitting-room till Ben Harris came for him; but as soon as Henry was safely out of the house with Ben, he made himself more comfortable by certain minor adjustments. He loosened his suspenders so that wearing his trousers did not feel quite so much like riding a rail; he eased the collar which irked him by the simple expedient of sticking his finger inside it and jerking till something gave way. The painful newness of his finger tips passed off when he dug with one hand at the palm of the other; and by the time he and Harris reached their destination, he was as comfortable as a boy can be in clean clothes.

They turned into a narrow hallway, which Henry found immediately disappointing. He had vaguely imagined that the *Tribune*, which was a dignified periodical in good standing, would be housed in a certain restrained magnificence. Instead, they went up two flights of narrow stairs, the wooden treads badly worn, and pushed open a door, once painted gray, now smeared with the marks of inky fingers. This door admitted them at once into a room of irregular shape, rather longer than it was wide, and insufficiently supplied with windows and with air. What windows there were, were caked with dust outside, filmed with the blue deposit of tobacco smoke within. Also they were, though this was June, tightly closed except for one in a far corner; and the air in the room was heavy and stale, and seemed to have been in use for a long time. It had an inertia which was difficult to overcome; Henry was to discover that no matter how many windows were opened, no matter how briskly the wind blew through the place, this heavy atmosphere remained undisturbed.

Ben Harris was instructing him. "Hang up your hat," he directed, setting an example by turning to where some nails were driven into the wall. Henry did so, his eyes alert to miss no detail of the scene before him. The room seemed at first glance to be full of men and boys. There were desks at irregular intervals around the wall; rolltop desks, heaped with litter, and behind which sat men in their shirt sleeves, reading newspapers or writing with pen or pencil. In the middle of the room a rectangular table was surrounded by three or four men in chairs, and others standing up, all talking or busying themselves with tasks to Henry's eyes obscure and therefore glamorous.

Ben led him toward one of the desks at the head of the room. The man seated there looked up with a quick, jerky movement of his head, pushing back the green cardboard

shade above his eyes; and he said crisply: "Morning, Harris!"

Harris replied: "Good morning, Mr. Dryden." He added: "This is the boy I asked you about."

Henry looked at the man and the man looked at Henry. Henry saw a large head, partially bald, with a wisp of black hair drawn across the bald spot; saw a pair of small black eyes, inclined to smile, and exceedingly shrewd; saw a small nose and a wide, pleasant mouth. Pat Dryden, city editor of the *Tribune*, saw in his turn a somewhat shock-headed boy of unimpressive stature, with rather good features, a pair of eyes surprisingly wistful and appealing, and a cheek like a girl's. He looked over his glasses at Henry and asked sharply:

"What's your name?"

"Henry Beeker."

"What are you doing here?"

"Mr. Harris said I could get a job, could be an office boy."

"Do you smoke?"

"Sometimes I do."

"Well cut it out; it won't do you any good." He added abstractedly to Harris: "Tell Jimmy I hired him." And was instantly immersed once more in the task under his hand.

Ben Harris led Henry across the room toward a bench near the stairs. Two boys already sat there; and Henry had seen others about the room. Ben asked: "Where's Jimmy?" One of the boys answered:

"Downstairs."

Ben said to Henry, "Sit down here." To the boy who had spoken, "Tell Jimmy Mr. Dryden hired this boy." To Henry again: "Make yourself at home."

He turned away, and Henry was left quite alone; infinitely more alone than if there had been no one else in the room, for he was in the presence of two boys a little older than himself, who emphasized his loneliness.

He listened, without looking toward them, to their wise conversation. They were, it seemed to him, immensely mature and sophisticated. He guessed they must be at least sixteen years old. Then another boy, a little older, came up the stairs and approached them; and one of the two jerked a thumb toward Henry and said:

"Dryden hired him."

The newcomer at once addressed himself to Henry. Henry was inclined to like him; he was tall and a little stooped, and he had ink on his fingers. He looked Henry over casually, and asked:

"What's your name?"

Henry told him.

"I'm Jimmy Horn," the other explained. "Head office boy. I'm your boss, see?"

"Yes, sir," said Henry, at once according him a respect which even Dryden had not commanded.

"Ever work anywhere before?"

"No, sir."

"Well, I suppose I got to show you around. Come on!"

So, under Jimmy Horn's guidance, Henry was initiated into the topography of the *Tribune* building. He learned the way to the composing room, to each of the mechanical departments below stairs; he was shown where the advertising men worked, where the business office was located. A small wicket was pointed out to him as the most important locality in the office. "That's where you get paid," Jimmy explained. Back in the city room again, he received more general instructions. When anyone shouted "Boy!" he was to answer, and do what he was told to do. Every man in the office was his boss; any task they might devise was included among his duties. Jimmy named and indicated the most important men in the room. Pat Dryden, the city editor, and Herb Vaughn, who was in charge of the copy desk. "You'll get most of your jobs from him," Jimmy explained. "Taking copy downstairs and getting proofs." Henry perceived dislike in Jimmy's tones, and looked at Mr. Vaughn a second time. He seemed a man sufficiently innocuous; tall and lean, with a ruff of stiff grayish brown hair and an iron countenance that was belied by a weary and not unfriendly eye. Then there was Tom Pope, rotund and Pickwickian, who covered the State House, wrote political editorials, and could tell a funny story better than any man in the office. And Bob Proctor, the best reporter on the staff; a young fellow with heavy black hair and brows, an iron-blue jaw where his beard showed through the skin, and a dead pallor on his cheeks. And Charlie Niblo, who was Pat Dryden's assistant, and whose chief duty seemed to be to cut clippings from many newspapers, all day long. Henry thought he looked young, but tired. Charlie had yellow hair, already scant. In a still more dusty, still more stifling compartment off the main room, Jimmy showed him Peter Hendricks; "Old Peter," Jimmy called him. "He runs the reference department," Jimmy explained. "All those envelopes on the shelves. Full of clippings and things. Peter used to be a crackerjack once. When they get too old to do anything else, they usually end up in the reference."

This process of introduction was not completed all at once. It continued throughout the day; it was interrupted by occasional tasks, which Jimmy supervised. Henry devoted himself to learning his job with a certain grim intensity; there was little to learn, and by late afternoon he was sufficiently well grounded. Pat Dryden and Charlie Niblo spoke of him together, just before Dryden went out for supper. "New boy's a hustler," Dryden said.

"They all are, the first day," Niblo reminded him.

Dryden nodded, tugged on his coat and disappeared. No one else paid any particular attention to Henry. He was just a new office boy.

But Henry stayed at the office till Dryden, back from supper, asked why he did not go home. No one had told Henry to go home. He departed; and he walked homeward through the narrow ways with a definite conviction that in this one day he must have grown a foot in stature. He was a working man; only for the summer, it is true, but still a working man.

2

About this time, Henry began to get acquainted with his father. It could not fairly be said that he had before this known Dan Beeker at all. He had seen the blacksmith in many guises; as a manufacturer of rings from horseshoe nails; as the awe-inspiring deity who presided in that interesting realm, the blacksmith shop; as the executive authority in the home, who punished violations of the law laid down by Henry's sister Mary. But there had been no relation between them any more intimate than that between Henry and the policeman on the beat; his instinct had always been to avoid his father, and especially to avoid being left alone with him.

But Henry's new status as a wage earner began to change this situation. When, toward mid-August, Henry received a raise in pay, Dan Beeker accorded him a distinct respect. There was something almost pitiful in the man's delight in this success on the part of his son. His own powers were waning, and he was beginning to assume the physical aspect which remained as a portrait of him in Henry's memory thereafter. He was at this time fifty years old; but his muscles were beginning to let go and his thick legs no longer seemed to be rooted like trees in the soil they trod. His injured arm had somewhat withered from disuse; there was a perceptible difference in its girth, and especially in the firmness of the muscles. Also the blacksmith, whom Henry had always heretofore

pictured as standing powerfully erect, began to like to sit down. His abdominal muscles relaxed; for comfort's sake he left the top button of his trousers unfastened. His shirt stretched across his protruding abdomen and pulled out button holes or tore the buttons themselves away; and the neck that had been thick and firm and vigorous began to shrink till, since he wore the collar of his shirt open, you could perceive the cords in relief beneath the skin.

He did not work in the shop every day; there were times when the exertion of descending and ascending the stairs deterred him. So more and more during the hot months of that summer, Dan Beeker sat in his chair by the front window of the room he and his wife had shared, and looked out into the street with dull eyes that only brightened when his son came home at night.

He began to like to have Henry talk with him; they would sit sometimes all evening, Henry telling the things he had seen or heard or done that day while his father listened with nodding head. Henry, a neophyte in the newspaper world, was fascinated by the vast panorama which now unrolled along his enlarged horizon. The newspaper knows everything, sees everything, understands everything. Of all human institutions it comes nearest to the possession of the gift of omniscience. To Henry it seemed as though from the reporter's eye nothing was concealed. The fascination of the profession to which his life was to be devoted was already strongly laid upon him; and his father, in great measure, shared this feeling on the part of the son.

Perhaps the illness of President Grant served as much to bring these two together as any other one thing. Dan Beeker had more than once seen Grant in camp or upon the battlefield; he had for him a fanatical devotion. When Henry came home in the evening, his father's first question had usually to do with the reports from Saratoga; he followed the daily bulletins with the most acute interest and solicitude, and when Grant died, late in July, Beeker insisted that black cloth should be hung from the door knob on the street below.

Early in September, a short time before the reopening of school, when Henry was intended to relinquish his work in the *Tribune* office, a little drama which had dragged itself interminably was played to a conclusion in the Beeker home. George Nye mustered courage to put his hopes to the question; he asked Mary to marry him.

George had been a familiar figure about the house for years; even before the death of Henry's mother, the fact of

his devotion to Mary was recognized by all of them. When Henry's mother and sister both died, and only Mary was left to run the house and care for Dan Beeker and his son, it became obvious that George would have to wait. He did wait; he was always sprightly, never morose. Henry thought his sprightliness rather dull, but he liked George and since the acquisition of the bicycle, he had accorded to George and Ben Harris, the joint owners, something like reverence. But his service in the *Tribune* office had given him a degree of sophistication; after all, there were a great many people who owned bicycles. George was good enough for Mary, all right; almost anyone would be good enough for Mary. Henry had for his sister the intolerance of youth. But it seemed to him of little consequence whether she and George got married or no.

Mary did not ask his opinion. George, however, sought him as an ally; and to George, Henry promised a benevolent neutrality. "I don't care," he said. "If she wants to marry you, I don't care."

"She says she's got to take care of your father," George explained. He was torn between doubt and desire, spurred by a sudden determination. "I don't see why she's got to. He can get somebody. You and him can get along."

"I guess so," Henry agreed. "I don't care if she marries you. I guess she's going to get married some day, anyway."

"I want to get married now," George insisted desperately. He clung to this insistence as though afraid if he let go of it he would be swept from his moorings.

"Well, tell her so," Henry advised. "I don't care."

George did tell Mary so. There can be no doubt that she loved him. He was the only man she had ever known intimately; Ben Harris, who came sometimes to the house, served George only as foil. George was steady, he had a job which he had held for years and which seemed permanent, he had saved some money and, for all his bald head and his weak futility of humor, Mary loved him.

But she would not marry him. That sense of responsibility which all women have was strong in her. Her father was obviously on the verge of becoming something like an invalid; he had no other woman kin. Someone must care for him, and for Henry; so Mary sent George away.

Henry saw her, a little while afterward. She had been weeping, still wept; her spectacles were laid aside to give free passage for her tears, and this—as is usually the case with people who wear glasses constantly—gave her eyes a red and

ugly aspect, even without the traces of her grief. She was, Henry thought dispassionately, a dumpy, ugly sort of woman. At this time twenty-eight years old, she was undeniably stout. Neither romance nor tragedy seemed to fit such an aspect; Henry was quite unable to see in her anything like an heroic figure.

"Well, why don't you marry him, if you feel so bad?" he asked her dispassionately.

"Somebody's got to take care of you and papa, Henry," she told him, gulping and sniffling in an unattractive way.

"I guess you don't want to marry him very bad."

Her love flamed in her eyes. "Henry Beeker! Don't dare say that! Don't you ever say that again!"

The boy was faintly uncomfortable. "Well I guess papa don't want you to stay here if you don't want to," he urged.

She pleaded with him. "Don't tell papa, Henry. Don't tell him. It'd make him feel bad. I've got to take care of him, but he don't need to know."

It was beyond Henry's understanding; not till many years afterward was he able to perceive that in this moment his ugly and unlovable sister had been somehow sublime. At the time he thought her only wearisome. So George Nye ceased to come to the house; and after a day or two Mary went plodding about her duties, apparently the same as she had always been. A useful figure, but scarce a tragic one.

3

During this summer, Henry had made himself of value in the *Tribune* office, had found a place for himself. His pay had already been raised a dollar a week; and about the time school was to begin, Pat Dryden called him one day and asked:

"You still planning to go back to school, Henry?"

Henry said he was.

"Well, all right," Dryden assented. "But if you want to stay on here, we can give you a little more money, and a better job."

"What job?" Henry asked, his tongue thick in his mouth.

"Why, Jimmy Horn is getting too old to be an office boy," Dryden explained, his eyes twinkling. "He wants a chance to be a reporter, and I'm going to let him. If you want to stay on, you can have his job. You've got more life than the other boys."

Henry went home that night with his mind made up; the

fact that Mary was violently opposed to his proposal made no difference to him. He wished to stay in the *Tribune* office; she insisted that he go through high school. They argued the point, like lawyers, before Dan Beeker sitting as arbiter.

"I want to be a reporter," Henry told his father. "I want to be a newspaper man. And I'm old enough, and Mr. Dryden likes me; and I can earn more money. And school's no good, anyway."

"He ought to go to high school," Mary protested, over and over. "He ought to go to high school. He'll be glad some day."

"Well I'd like to know what we'd do without the money I earn," Henry insisted.

"I can earn money," Mary cried. "I will, too. I'll do something. But you've got to go to school, Henry. Tell him he's got to, papa."

"I'm not going to," Henry declared positively. His awe of his father was passing; he dared to assert his own determination. "I'm going to stay in the office. In a year or two I can be earning a lot of money. All we'll need. I'm not going to fool away time on any school."

Mary's desperate fight was hopeless from the first; Henry asserted, she could only plead. And Dan Beeker, weary of life and wishing only to sit still in his chair, was willing that Henry should support his idleness. Also Dan shared Henry's enthrallment with this profession the boy had espoused. His decision in the end was given in a tone of surrender.

"I guess we can't make Henry go to school if he don't want to, Mary," he reminded her. "He's pretty near a grown boy, now."

Mary recognized the fact that without her father as ally she was helpless. What hopes she had had for Henry she buried, sought to forget. The decision once made, the matter was not again revived. And Henry abandoned formal education; assumed the mantle of his new responsibilities.

Just before Thanksgiving, the *Tribune* distributed turkeys to all of its employees. Henry brought home his bird triumphantly. It gave him, as nothing else could have done, the sense of belonging to the paper. He was, thereafter, in his own thoughts, a man.

4

Henry's entrance into industry automatically removed him from the world of which he had been a part. The boys he

had known in school he no longer saw except upon rare occasions and for passing moments. In a little while they became like strangers; when he met one of them, each eyed the other with a curious stiffness. The meeting suggested the encounter of hostile dogs.

Sam Russell was the exception to this general rule. Between Henry and Sam there was always something deeper and more enduring than the casual friendship of youth. Even now, though Sam still stayed in school, he and Henry were often together, adventured together, widened by little and little their knowledge of the city. They discovered the Milldam, and liked to go there on Sundays to watch the horses which passed to and fro. The glistening coats, the smooth movement of the trotters, the click of hoofs and the swirl of dust delighted them. The two boys thought of themselves as connoisseurs, whether it were of the beasts trotting sedately in the outer lines, or of those swifter of foot who daily tested their speed against old rivals in the inner streams of the traffic. When occasionally wheels interlocked and there was a flurry of dust and a crackle of splintering wood, and a horse plunging wildly, Sam and Henry were likely to be first on the scene, observing or assisting as the case might be.

Henry was not much abroad in the evening. His father, who seldom went out nowadays, liked to talk with him about what went on in the world. Henry always brought home a copy of the *Tribune* and Dan Beeker would read it aloud, with a running fire of comment. Henry was picking up the jargon of the office; once in a while he called his father's attention to a story written by Bob Proctor.

"He's the best man on the paper," Henry explained seriously. "You ought to see him. He looks about half asleep all the time, but he surely can write. I'll bet I'll be doing what he's doing, in a few years."

Henry's father had no sense of letters; nevertheless he tried to comprehend Henry's secondhand enthusiasms and to share them. There was no longer any question of man and boy between these two; they met on equal terms, and Dan Beeker sometimes deferred to Henry's opinion in a way which made Henry feel tremendously important and proud.

While they talked together, Mary was usually occupied with her dishes in the kitchen; but sometimes she joined them for a while, before Dan Beeker grew sleepy and went to bed. At such times she seldom spoke; but when Henry grew enthusiastic over some piece of writing done by Proctor, Mary used to watch him with a curious intentness. Mary was a

spinster now; she had accepted the estate. The hopes and ambitions which she might otherwise have centered on a child of her own were concentrated on Henry. She told him once that he had a natural love of beautiful things and that he ought to be proud of this trait and study and work hard to make the most of it.

"I thought once you might learn to be a great singer," she reminded him. "But then your voice changed. That nasty tobacco . . . But maybe you can be a writer, some day. It takes a fine man to write a great book. I'd be mighty proud if you wrote a book, Henry."

"I'm going to," he would assure her. "I'm going to, some day."

As much as any man in the *Tribune* office, Peter Hendricks had contributed to this determination on Henry's part. Hendricks, who had charge of the reference department and was to be seen all day long in shirt sleeves and with a shade across his eyes, using his scissors on heaps of newspapers, was at this time just past sixty years old. He had been a newspaper man all his life, an editor in his time; and he liked to talk to Henry—who was a sympathetic listener—of the glories of the craft. He had once worked for Greeley, had known Dana. . . . To the rest of the office, the old man was a matter of jest because he liked so well to utter these great names; but to Henry he was of an heroic cast. When no tasks called the boy, he was apt to be found at Hendricks' elbow, so that Hendricks began to show him the science of clipping papers, while he preached to him the Gospel of Ink.

Hendricks told the boy he should prepare himself to be a writer. "Start now," he suggested. "Keep a diary. Write a little every day." Henry accepted that suggestion as a command. That night, before going to bed, in a notebook he had purchased on the way home, he wrote:

> This is going to be my diary. Mr. Hendricks told me to start it. He knows all about the newspaper business and he's telling me. I'm going to be a reporter. Then I'm going to write a book. I'm going to put down in this diary everything I do every day. Well, today, I got up and dressed and had breakfast and went to the office. Worked there all day. I bought this book on the way home. I talked to papa tonight. Now I'm going to bed.

He might have written another line of more moment. Ben Harris had told him, that day, that George Nye was married.

"Got married yesterday," Ben explained. "A girl where he works. She's no good. She'll spend all he's got, and then leave him. You see if she don't."

The news made little impression on Henry, but he did repeat it to Mary at the supper table; and Mary, he saw, turned very white when she heard, and then very red. Her round, fat face and her watery eyes had a curious aspect of pain which he sensed without understanding. It was with some vague hope of comforting her that he added:

"Ben Harris says the girl's no good, though!"

He saw that Mary was crying. She always wept easily; but after they had all gone to bed that night, he heard her sobbing in the room next to his, and wished angrily that he had not told her George was married.

The *Tribune*, at this time, was in a prosperous condition, and new men were being hired. One of these newcomers Henry was inclined to like. He was David Pell, a young fellow in the early twenties, thin and pale, wearing glasses regularly. He was without experience; and Henry, discovering the other's ignorance of the tasks before him, adopted toward the young man a tone of gentle patronage, advised and coached him in his duties. Pell returned for these services a gratitude which Henry found delightful. That he was Pell's benefactor made him think Pell rather a fine fellow. Pell had come to work on trial. It was a matter of personal gratification to Henry that he held his job.

Another newcomer was Martin Bull, whose reputation had preceded him. He had made a certain success on one of the other papers in town; had worked in New York for six months. He was more industrious than Bob Proctor, who took his ease when he could, drank more than he should, and was not always on hand when he was wanted; also Bull could write fully as well. Dryden began to give him stories which would hitherto have gone to Proctor; and Bull handled these tasks easily and adequately.

He was a fast worker, so that there were times when he had nothing to do; and at such times he liked to bully the office boys with small unnecessary tasks. One day, from his desk, he shouted:

"Beeker!"

Henry was at the moment helping Peter Hendricks clip papers, so he bade one of the younger boys see what was wanted. But when this boy appeared at his shoulder, Bull stared at him, bade him be gone and turned around to see

where Henry was. Caught his eye and called authoritatively: "You, Beeker. Come here!"

Henry obeyed; for though his authority over the other office boys was absolute, the meanest reporter had authority over him. Bull said harshly: "Next time I call you, you come. Hear!"

"I was busy," Henry told him.

"Busy, Hell!" the man rejoined. "Now you go out and get me some cigars." He named a cheap and popular brand. "And do it quick, too."

The boy obeyed him. He paid for the cigars from his own pocket, returned and laid them on Bull's desk. "They were twenty-five cents," he said.

"All right!" Bull nodded, writing busily.

"I paid for them," Henry told him.

"Well, what's the matter?" Bull demanded, swinging toward him. "You afraid you won't get your money?"

"No." Henry was not of a combative nature.

"Yes, you are! Well, just for that you can wait till pay day. Get out of here."

Henry drew aside uncertainly. Then Tom Pope, two desks away, called him. Henry liked Pope. The State House man was rotund and cheerful; his nose was rubicund and his head was bald, but the derby hat he always wore hid his head and the stub of the cigar habitually clinched between his teeth obscured with smoke the full radiance of his nose. Henry approached him, and Pope asked:

"How much does he owe you, young fellow?"

"A quarter," Henry replied.

Pope gave him a coin. "Stick that in your pocket," he bade. "I'll let him owe me." He called to Bull: "I paid the boy that quarter, Marty. You can owe it to me."

Bull swung around, grinned at him. "All right," he agreed. "Whatever you say!" He was too wise to come into conflict with Tom Pope.

But Henry always thereafter disliked Marty Bull.

One day Peter Hendricks failed to come to the office. He sent word that he had a bad cold, would be back in a few days; and he suggested that Henry Beeker could take care of his work. "He knows as much about it as I do," he explained.

"How about it?" Pat Dryden asked Henry. "Think you can?"

"I guess so," Henry assented.

Dryden nodded. "All right," he said, and turned to his desk again.

So Henry assumed a new dignity. It would be, he knew, for only a few days, till Peter came back. Nevertheless he devoted himself to his task with a zealous ardor.

But Peter's cold hung on, and developed into pneumonia; and like most newspaper men of that period, Peter had been a heavy drinker. So he died. The temporary arrangement by which Henry filled his place was still theoretically temporary; but Henry did the work, and Dryden was too busy to concern himself with the matter so long as the work was done.

Henry regretted Peter; but he liked the new job.

IV

Sam Russell's grandfather died. He lived in Framingham, on a farm; and Sam's father was his only son. Once, some years before, Sam had gone to spend a summer on this farm and returned to tell Henry astonishing tales of what he saw and did there. Now Sam's father decided to leave the city and go back to the farm to live and Sam, perforce, went with him. The two boys took the parting philosophically.

"You've got to come out, some time. You'd like it," Sam said. "I learned to milk a cow, and I used to cut off the chickens' heads and hunt the eggs and everything."

This vague invitation crystallized, through Sam's mother, who liked Henry, into a more definite one. Mrs. Russell, a thin, persistent woman said to Mary:

"You must send Henry out to visit with us, next summer. It would do him a world of good. I've always wanted to go back to the country. We never did like it, here."

Mary said vaguely: "I guess Henry'll go if he wants to. He's getting to be a big boy, now."

"He just gets on the train and we'll meet him," Mrs. Russell promised. There was, within her drawn exterior, some warmth; and by the time Henry's vacation season came, the matter was more definitely arranged. Sam met him at the station in a buggy, driving an ancient white horse with a sway back; and Henry, determined not to be awed by anything he might encounter, said as they drove out of town:

"Not much of a horse."

"Say," said Sam proudly. "This old horse is the oldest horse anywhere around here. This old horse is over twenty years old."

Henry, though he knew nothing of farming, knew something of horses. "He ought to be shot," he said mercilessly.

"I tell you, it takes a pretty good horse to live to be that old," Sam insisted.

"He'll drop in two, some day."

Sam laughed defensively. "Well, he's good enough for me, anyway."

They were leaving the fringes of the town, and the wide landscape opened out before them. Henry was somewhat oppressed by these vast open spaces.

"Not very many people live out here, do they," he suggested.

"They do, too."

"Well, there aren't many houses."

"There's one on every farm."

"They're pretty far apart."

"Well you can't have a farm in your front yard," Sam reminded him. "We've got ninety acres, and a brook with trout in it."

Henry knew what trout were and was impressed. "Did you ever catch one?" he asked.

"Sure. We'll go fishing a lot. I'll show you."

Their road had mounted, now topped a hill below which spread a valley of tilled land. "That's our farm, down there," Sam explained, pointing. Henry saw the cluster of white buildings, the weathered barn looming big beyond the house. His eyes wandered. The month was July, the day cool and filled with a faint and lovely haze which touched with blue the distant hills. He had a sudden choking sense of beauty; said uncertainly:

"That's awful pretty."

But he felt with a faint shame the inadequacy of the phrase.

During these two weeks on the Russell farm, Henry forgot for a space his destiny; the *Tribune* office receded into infinite distance, remote and impersonal. The boys worked together and played together. Henry learned, under Sam's tutelage, to milk a cow; he fed the pigs; he rode the old white horse. A colt kicked him in the leg and he had a huge bruise which Mrs. Russell treated every night with scolding solicitude. Of this bruise, he was immensely proud. He helped with the haying, drove the hay wagon to the barn. Between chores,

he and Sam explored the countryside; and now and then, without warning, scenes of beauty burst upon Henry's consciousness and left him dizzy with their sweetness. Impressions, indelible and lasting, were implanted on his mind. His mental horizon was widened, too; he assisted at the birth of a calf, and was initiated into the biology of the barnyard. Matters which when recited in whispers had seemed furtive and unclean, in the open light of day appeared to him as absorbingly interesting and completely matter of fact. The experience was a wholesome one.

When he went back to the city, Henry was vaguely changed and matured. This development had one curious outward manifestation. Hitherto he had given no particular thought to his outward appearance. His hair, for example, had straggled roughly about his head; but on his next visit to the barber he adopted the current style; directed the man to cut his hair pompadour. Consulting his own likeness in the mirror, he thought the change made him look taller. This pleased him; the fact that Sam Russell was by this time almost a head above him had annoyed Henry. Throughout his life, it was always a cross to him that he was not tall, and he sometimes wondered whether Mary was right in saying that tobacco had stunted his stature.

2

During the winter that followed, he began to understand that there was something mysteriously wrong with his father. Dan Beeker, at the height of his physical powers when he suffered the accident that had deprived him of the use of an arm, had since then faded steadily. At first the situation had been covered by the fiction that he was taking a rest; but Mary was never deceived by this hypothesis, and Henry now recognized its falsity, perceived that his father was not well. Their doctor confirmed this diagnosis, although in fact it needed no confirmation. Dan Beeker, who had always been a hearty eater, was put upon a strict diet, and his temper suffered. He had hours of anger when nothing pleased him. Henry, away from home all day, suffered less from these moments than Mary; but Mary was used to suffering.

The blacksmith shop had now for some time gone on without Dan Beeker. The young man who had come to help had remained to do all the work, and another helper had at last become necessary. During this winter, these two combined

in an offer to buy Dan Beeker out; the sum was small, but the offer was fair, and Mary persuaded her father to accept it. For thirty years of labor, Dan Beeker received a living during those years, and seven hundred dollars at the end of the term.

But Mary was satisfied. She had long been wishing it were possible to leave this neighborhood. The home itself, in which her mother and her sister had died, was cheerless and forlorn, and the rent had been increased. With the sale of the shop, Mary felt they were free to move away. They took a small flat in the South End of the town, and moved into it just before Christmas. Their windows faced a little square of green grass. His father, dazed by pain, and by so many changes, submitted like a piece of furniture to the uprooting process. Henry had no regrets; with Sam Russell gone, no intimate friend held him to the old locality.

Mary hoped the change would do her father good. So far as his physical welfare was concerned, there was no improvement; but it did serve to tranquillize these last months of his life. He fell into a habit of retrospect, as old men do, although he was only fifty-two or three years old. He liked to talk to Henry about his own youth, about his wartime experiences, about his wife who was Henry's mother. Henry had begun to miss his mother, and to long for her, as he had not missed her or longed for her when she died. He encouraged his father to speak of her; and one evening Dan Beeker was minded by such reminiscence of a duty long neglected. He said to his son:

"There's something I've been wanting to talk to you about, Henry."

Henry, for all his increasing maturity, still addressed his father by the appellation of his boyhood. "What is it, papa?" he asked.

Dan Beeker moved uncertainly. "Well, there are some things a father ought to tell his son, I guess. And I've never talked about 'em with you."

Henry, understanding, nodded. "You mean about women."

His father blushed heavily at this frankness. "Why, yes, I guess so."

"I guess I know all there is to know about that," Henry said uneasily.

"How do you know?"

"Well, I used to hear the boys talk about it."

"Yes, I guess you would," his father said slowly. "But you wouldn't get it straight from them."

"Well, I used to figure things out for myself a lot," Henry explained. "I used to study things up."

"Where? How d'you mean?"

"I used to look up words in the dictionary in the office."

Dan Beeker was a little staggered. "You know about keeping away from girls, and everything."

"I never could see anything in that," Henry said. "I've never mixed with them much."

"It doesn't pay," his father told him. "It's a good thing, when you get married, to know you can have good children."

"Yes, I guess so," his son assented, embarrassed in his turn.

The man sighed, relieved to think his task was done. "Well, you'll be all right. You're a good boy, Henry."

Henry squirmed under that accusation. "Oh, I guess I'm like anybody else. Only fooling with girls—well, it never struck me as any fun."

Dan Beeker nodded ponderously. "That's right," he affirmed. "Yes sir, that's right, Henry." The subject died; but the conversation left Henry curiously moved, increased in him that sense of maturity which had of late possessed his waking hours. He was at this time in his eighteenth year.

It was in the spring of that year that Ben Harris left the *Tribune*. Ben, whose instincts made him a forerunner of the sensational school of journalism, had sought to inject sensationalism into some of his stories; but the *Tribune* was sedate, and the result was conflict. Overruled again and again, Harris became more and more insistent, till Dryden was forced to let him go. He found a new place with the *Tribune*'s rival; but he and Henry still saw each other occasionally in the lunch counter where they ate their midday meal. There Harris told him one day the latest news of George Nye, said his wife had left him.

"She's gone off to New York, to work," he explained. "I knew she and George wouldn't get along."

Henry, whose education in human nature was progressing, did not at once repeat the news at home; but one day when conversation at the supper table suggested the topic, Dan Beeker asked Mary: "Ever hear from George Nye? What's become of George, anyhow?"

"Why, he got married, you know," said Mary bravely.

"Got married, did he?" her father repeated in some surprise. "I kind of thought he was planning to marry you."

Mary managed a laugh that was almost light. She shook her head. "No, papa. George and I never planned to get married at all." She laughed again. "You're getting so you forget,

papa. We told you, when George got married. Don't you remember? At supper one night."

Dan Beeker shook his head. "No, I don't recollect at all."

"Yes, we did." Her eye warning him, Mary appealed to Henry, "Didn't we, Henry?"

"His wife's left him now," Henry blurted.

A curious silence fell. Dan Beeker was absorbed in his meagre meal, fretting at the rigors of the diet imposed on him. "As well be dead as this way," he muttered petulantly. Henry stole a glance at Mary and saw the rigidity of her countenance; he spoke laughingly to his father, comforting him, diverting the complaints from Mary's head to his own.

The brother and sister were by their father's condition thrown more and more into alliance. Dan Beeker was obviously failing. That summer, when Sam Russell repeated his invitation to Henry to come to the farm, Henry asked if his father might also come, to board. The arrangement was made, and Henry and his father went to the country together.

"You're going to come back just feeling fine, papa," Mary assured her father at the station.

The man shook his head. "I don't know, Mary. I'm kind of low. I don't know as it'll do me any good to go. Maybe I better stay right here."

"No, no, papa. You go . . ." The train was ready to start; she and Henry helped him aboard.

But when he came back it was to take to his bed in earnest; and he never left it again. . . . When they returned from the cemetery, Henry gave himself to tears; wept as he had not wept for either his mother or sister. He was older now, and fit for grief.

Mary mothered him in her arms. "I'll take care of you, Henry," she promised.

He had almost forgotten his old dislike of Mary. He found her ample bosom curiously reassuring now.

3

George Nye attended Dan Beeker's funeral service, and rode afterward to the cemetery. Henry remarked him there, and was astonished to discover that since he had seen George, his sister's old lover had aged painfully. At the grave side, he saw George look toward Mary once or twice; and once he thought their eyes met, but after the brief ceremony, when the clods began to fall, George disappeared, and Henry and Mary went home together without encountering him.

Dan Beeker's death left for a while a great gap in the lives of his daughter and his son. Mary's china and her tubes of paint reappeared, as they were apt to do when she had time upon her hands. During Henry's day-long absences, she had little or nothing to do: the housekeeping, for a woman of her abilities, was ridiculously easy. So she dabbled in paint; but her mind was a ferment, and after a time, she perceived that for the first time in her life, she was relatively a free agent. She spoke to Henry, indefinitely, about a change in their living arrangements. Always frugal, so that there was a certain fund of money put away, she began now to search for new frugalities. One day found what she sought.

Henry had told her to do what seemed best to her; he was willing that she should manage him as she had always done. Nevertheless she consulted him about the thing she had in mind. Searching among the boarding houses in a neighborhood a few blocks from their present home, she had found a woman, a Mrs. Bassett, who was struggling in a futile way against a mound of debts. "I thought we might go there to board, Henry," she explained. "And she says I can help with the cooking, and pay for our food so. And we can save money, there."

Henry had no scruples against Mary's working. He had no background that justified such scruples. She had always worked, without pay. It seemed to him admirable that she should be paid for working now; and he applauded her plan.

She sold their furniture to a second-hand dealer of the poorer sort. It was old and worn; she disposed of it all, with the exception of half a dozen small objects which were dear to her. Her mother's rocking chair with a broken cane seat, for which the dealer would only pay twenty-five cents in any case; the small veneered writing box in which she had always kept her own most treasured possessions; the mirror before which she and Nancy in the past had combed and brushed their hair; a crayon portrait of her father . . . In their new quarters, Henry had a small room on the third floor, large enough to contain a bed, a small table, a chair and a bureau. Mary's room, equally small, was on the floor above and directly over his. Before Christmas, they were as much at home as it is possible to be in a boarding house. Mary, by listening to Mrs. Bassett's troubles, had won the woman's confidence; and Henry had acquired a passing acquaintance with a young man on the same floor, whose name was Harry Coster, and who worked as a bookkeeper in a leather house downtown. The other people in the boarding house were merely new

faces, vaguely distinguishable against the background of strange countenances which bounded Henry's world.

Henry liked Harry Coster. He found a gaiety in Harry which appealed to him. Harry earned a sufficient salary; he had no dependents, and he spent his money as he chose. During this period when Henry's own financial burdens were becoming less irksome, the spectacle of spending interested and attracted him. Once, meeting by chance downtown, they lunched together and Coster paid for the check.

"Put it away," he bade Henry, when the boy reached into his pocket. "Put it away. You're my guest, I tell you. I'm going to pay for this today."

The large gesture pleased Henry immensely. A few days later, seeking vaguely to emulate Harry, he bought a bag of candy and brought it home to Mary; and he took some in to Harry's room that evening. Mary was strangely touched by his extravagance.

"But it's all right," she added eagerly. "I want you to have things, the way other boys do."

"Boys!" he ejaculated; nevertheless was pleased that he had pleased her.

Mary, who had expected to do only small tasks here, was finding that the conduct of the establishment devolved more and more upon her. Mrs. Bassett was one of those widows who never forgot their bereavement. She was in her early fifties, and her husband was dead these twelve years, but she spoke of him constantly. He was, Henry gathered, a choleric man and a hot one.

"There ain't many women would have put up with what I did," Mrs. Bassett often declared. Her voice was apt to lower itself in the course of the recital. "He was a man you couldn't please. Always a money maker, he was, and left me well fixed, too. But my health, my dear. Don't you ever marry a big man, Miss Beeker. They're awful hard on a woman. No consideration at all!"

The mystery that lurked behind her remarks piqued Henry. Once, finding himself alone with Mrs. Bassett in Mary's room, he thought of questioning her, but found the widow persistently vague.

"You wouldn't understand, Mr. Beeker," she said secretively. "You're a sober young man, as I've seen, and probably you'd be kind to a woman. Why, at your age my husband had sweethearts everywhere. I've often heard him say so. The stories he'd tell; and to me, his wife as ever was. Of course that was before I ever married him. He kind of swept me

away. He was a big man, and had a loud way of talking. And nobody warned me." She wagged her head. "I lived to regret, Mr. Beeker. You say to your sister, as I've said, many a time; don't marry a big man. Lord, what a woman has to bear with!"

Henry found himself vaguely admiring this husband she traduced. Not that he disliked Mrs. Bassett. She was fussily attentive to the comfort of her lodgers; and she was kind to Mary and thought well of her. Nevertheless the hinted prowess of Mr. Bassett inspired in him a desire to emulate that man of many sweethearts. Harry Coster, now; there was another who had sweethearts. There were pictures in his room; some on the wall, more in a drawer of his bureau. Once or twice he told Henry about these girls, lecturing upon each picture as though it were a text. His discourses were heavily censored; the elisions were indicated by winks, by smirks, by ejaculations of enthusiasm or delight! Coster was a big man, too; and Henry regretted his own small stature, which bade fair to be permanent. Coster, now; Mrs. Bassett would probably warn any girl against such a man. Henry began to look with more attention at the girls of his own age whom he occasionally encountered in the outer world, and he studied with some attention the waitress in the dining room. She was sandy haired and oily of complexion and her name was Sallie. Disappointingly uninspiring, she seemed to him to be.

Mrs. Bassett had, in addition to her dead husband, another topic; there was somewhere in the background of her life a sister. A widowed sister whose husband had been in a business way in Worcester.

"A good man, too," Mrs. Bassett insisted. "Not like Mr. Bassett, but kind. No wife ever had a better husband, I always told her, when she used to complain. He left her a life insurance, and a house. Very comfortable, my sister is."

Henry was not sure what a life insurance was. He had heard the phrase, though remotely, and knew it had to do with money. How much money did not appear. Mrs. Bassett's sister, vested in this life insurance, assumed a financial eminence. It appeared that she had long been anxious that Mrs. Bassett should come and live with her.

"But I was always one to be independent," Mrs. Bassett explained. "And I've often told her so. I've taken care of myself since Mr. Bassett died, and little enough help I got from him, and little enough health he left me to work with. But I've always taken care of myself. And I tell her so. I'd never go to live on another's bounty, I've told her."

The picture was worked out, day by day, in casual conversation full of indirection. The Worcester sister was, it appeared, seven years older than Mrs. Bassett, and she lived on the rent of the house in which she herself occupied two rooms, and she had money in the bank. How much money did not appear. In this she was superior to Mrs. Bassett, who —for reasons vaguely connected with Mr. Bassett—had not money in the bank, but only a little hidden away in her room downstairs.

"If I had money in the bank," Mrs. Bassett sometimes said, "it might be different. For my sister was always easy to live with; and there's days when I'd like to rest my old bones and ease myself. But I was always one to be independent as my health would let me be."

Mary must have weighed this situation for some time before at last she broached her new project to Henry. When she did so, he agreed readily enough. She wished to give him details, ways and means, income and outgo; he listened without understanding, and assured her that he knew she would do the best thing. In the end, it came to this. Mrs. Bassett, with a little money in the bank at last to permit her to feel independent, departed for Worcester and her sister's home; and Mary acquired the lease, debts, good will and custom of the lodging house entire.

It made, almost instantly, a change in Mary. With this broader responsibility to inspire her, she was a different person. Henry thought she seemed taller, no longer so pudgy and stout; and her eyes, behind their heavy lenses, became acute instead of watery. Harry Coster, who had a joking way with him, sometimes teased her about it. One night in the early spring he took Mary to see Thatcher, Primrose and West, The Millionaire Monarchs of Minstrelsy.

V

Henry, doing his routine work in the dusty reference department at the office in a dull and dusty way, had of late been stagnating; the *Tribune* had become merely a job. He was acquiring the sophistication and the cynicism of a news-

paper man, without his broad knowledge and wide range of interests. But during the summer that followed his father's death, a number of big news stories occupied the columns of the *Tribune,* as of every other paper in the land; and they served to reawaken his interest in the profession which had enthralled his boyish imagination.

One morning in early June, one of the righthand columns of the first page was headed by the black line:

A DEATH FLOOD

And below this, in smaller letters:

Appalling Catastrophe at Johnstown, Pa.

Henry read the first meagre reports in the horse car on his way to the office; and for days thereafter, with cold chills running up and down his spine, he followed the story of the terrific tragedy. The drama of the first calamity thrilled him as a great spectacle; the ugly horrors of the days that followed —stench of bodies, starving hundreds, ghouls given swift and stern justice on the spot—occupied his waking moments and filled his dreams. Twice he cried out in the night, awakening Mary who still kept her room above his own. She came hurrying down to make sure he was not ill, and found him huddled in a heap, a boy full of fearful fancies; and she lit the gas and comforted him.

Then, the first edge of horror blunted, he began to ape the other men in the office in their attitude toward the affair. It was a big story, the biggest in years, for circulation had increased phenomenally, and the newspaper point of view is as unimpassioned as that of a surgeon. Someone clipped from a New York paper two columns of detail gathered by a skilled reporter when the tragedy was less than a day old, and pasted it on the bulletin board as a model of newspaper writing. Henry studied this model and admired it imitatively, without knowing wherein its excellence lay. Tom Pope told Henry it was the greatest newspaper story he had ever read.

"You study it, son," he suggested. "Take that for a pattern. When you can write like that, you'll be a real reporter."

Then the echoes ceased to reverberate and the catastrophe already began to be forgotten. John L. Sullivan was to fight

Kilrain; and the city loved John L. Henry forgot Johnstown in reading about the training program of the pugilist. He knew each detail of the routine which the great man followed at Belfast. He admired the sagacity of Muldoon. When he read that eight gallon jugs of Belfast water would accompany Sullivan to New Orleans, he applauded as though this were a measure he had urged from the first.

"Keep his stomach from getting upset," he said learnedly. "The water down south would probably give him yellow fever, or something."

The account of Sullivan's departure from his training quarters, in a "heavy farm wagon drawn by a pair of sleepy, big-barrelled mares" soothed him with its air of placid assurance; and the ensuing adventures with the law, at Rochester and onward, excited his imagination. The coming fight assumed for a space the aspect of a duel between Sullivan and Governor Lowry of Mississippi, who had fobidden the battle; the plan to run through that state on a special train without a stop seemed to Henry a coup worthy of the great adventurers of history.

His interest in the coming combat was interrupted by the city's own celebration of the Fourth of July. He spent the day downtown, chuckled at the country folk flocking about the Common on their annual visit to the city, laughed at the parade of Horribles. To ride on the crowded horse cars gave him a sense of personal importance. When the rain postponed the fireworks, he felt a placid superiority to the disappointed visitors who had to go home without witnessing the expected spectacle. A day or two later, in a burst of munificence, and because Ben Harris met him on the street and advised him to do so, he took Mary to see the Ossified Man at Austin and Stone's.

Then his attention turned once more to the fight news. He studied the crude newspaper cuts of challenger and champion, and made vocal wagers that John L. would win. Sullivan's coat of arms—Shamrock, rising sun, harp and the Stars and Stripes—seemed to him admirable and thrilling as a battle cry. He read attentively, in the *Tribune*'s own story of the day before the fight, this paragraph:

> "No battle of the ring has ever excited the interest this one has, and the probabilities are that another of its kind will never take place, as the amount of money at stake is something stupendous, and the undertaking is fraught with danger."

Jimmy Horn, once office boy, now reporter, took a scornful attitude toward this suggestion of peril; and Henry argued the point with him. He pointed out to Jimmy that five hundred professional killers would have ringside seats, that one of these characters had killed two men; and he reminded the older boy that the law was sure to interfere, might send even John L. to jail. As for the financial aspect of the fight, the stakes were $20,000; seven hundred tickets would be sold for $15 apiece, and three thousand for $10 each. The figures were colossal.

"I'll bet they don't even fight at all," Jimmy Horn retorted; and he showed Henry a quotation from an unidentified source, in the *Tribune*'s own story. "In my opinion, the fight will be stopped before any one is knocked out," this unnamed man said. "There is too much at stake to permit a victory."

The account of the long battle, Henry read over and over till he knew every blow; and his triumph over Jimmy Horn was the sweetest moment of his life. When John L., having run a legal gauntlet, came home to Boston, Henry was in the crowd which greeted him, and felt a proprietary interest in the great man. Sullivan's eventual arrest and the good humor with which he served his nominal sentence as guest on a southern plantation, seemed to Henry only to add to the lustre of a mighty name.

In September of that year, Herb Vaughn died. Henry had as an office boy been much at Vaughn's elbow, since through the latter's hands all copy eventually passed before going to the compositors below stairs. The relation had made him dislike Vaughn; nevertheless he read with interest the obituary which the *Tribune* printed. Vaughn had come to work as an office boy in 1860, doing whatever he was told to do. "He sold papers, delivered mail, ran errands and helped the janitor." In 1865 he became a reporter, then a special writer, court reporter, war correspondent, telegraph editor . . . "A record full of hope and promise for every struggling newspaper worker, no matter how small the position he may at the present time occupy." Henry read this, and promised himself that he would some day rise as high as Vaughn had risen; and he began consciously to work in that direction. Once or twice in the past he had written a few lines which had seen print. He began to watch for opportunities to repeat this feat. One day he saw a horse car knock down a little girl, and got her name, and brought the story to the office; and on a certain night the clangor of fire engines roused him, and he

dressed and hurried out to watch a fire two or three blocks away, and was able to add something to the story of the man sent out from the office to cover the event.

Pat Dryden received these contributions with only a formal comment; but in the later part of November, Harry Coster told Henry one evening that the manager of the office in which he worked had been discharged in disgrace as a result of some peculation.

"I knew him well," said Harry largely. "He wasn't so much to blame. His wife was sick; and he needed the money."

Henry tried writing that story; and Pat Dryden read his manuscript with some attention, asked where Henry got his facts, and sent no less a man than Bob Proctor himself to look into the matter. The result was half a column in the next day's paper, and a word of praise for Henry.

"Keep on," said Dryden approvingly. "You'll make a reporter, Beeker, before you're through!"

"Yes sir," Henry replied bravely. "That's what I mean to do."

2

On the morning of Thanksgiving Day, fire broke out in the district centering at Bedford and Kingston streets. Henry, lying abed in the pleasant indolence of a holiday, sensed an unusual stir in the city below him, and rose to look out of his window. Downtown he saw a pall of rising smoke; and he jerked on his clothes, raced down the stairs, flung a word to Mary and departed. He had that love of a conflagration which survives in most of us from the days when we huddled about a fire in the mouth of the home cave; but he had also the cultivated instinct of a newspaper man. He saw that this was an event; and instead of going to the fire itself to see what he might see, he made his way to the *Tribune* office to report for duty.

He found the city room already a place of turmoil. Dryden, in command, was more excited than Henry had ever seen him, dispatching carriages to the remoter parts of the city to bring in from their homes Tom Pope, Bob Proctor, Marty Bull and the other skilled reporters needed in the emergency.

"We're going to do a big thing on this," Dryden cried. "A big thing! We've got to have the best story in town tonight."

Henry he immediately commandeered. "Get down there," he directed. "We've got the use of an office on Bedford Street.

Our men are reporting there and writing their stuff there. You can do it. Get names, anything you can. Report every little while what you've got. Hustle, now."

It was the biggest fire the city had known since 1872; and all that day, forgetting the *Tribune*'s turkey, well roasted and waiting for him at the boarding house, Henry toiled, his lungs full of smoke, his face parched by the reflected heat of the flames, his garments spattered by the water from the streams played on the fire. Now and then he saw Bob Proctor moving here and there, professionally calm. Once he met Marty Bull, who bade him go back and fetch copy paper. Henry refused point blank.

"I'm taking orders from Mr. Dryden," he said, and Bull swore to see that he was discharged, next day. Twice he encountered Tom Pope; and each time the other was talking with one of the firemen, more rubicund than ever in the heat, and quite unruffled by the turmoil all about him. Once Henry was knocked down by the plunging head of a fire horse, where a team was standing in a side street, the truck empty of ladders against the curb half a block nearer the fire itself. Once he was on the spot when two firemen dragged a comrade out of a burning building, stupefied with smoke. Three times, in herdics drawn by galloping horses, he raced to the *Tribune* building with copy; and some of this copy was written on a typewriter. Only two or three of the men in the office were able to operate these machines; but they made for speed, and Henry himself had experimented with one in his leisure time.

Late in the afternoon the fruits of all these labors appeared in a special edition. At the head of a column on the first page appeared the words:

IN ASHES

Below, there were three cuts of burnings buildings, the cuts made from drawings produced on the spot by the *Tribune* artists, and each one miraculously vivid. Twenty-six columns of reading matter—Henry measured them—extended from the first page to the fourth and the seventh inside pages. The *Tribune* was to boast next day that in all these twenty-six columns, there were few inaccuracies, and no repetitions; and that only the use of that ultra-modern appliance, the typewriter, made possible the production of so much copy.

Henry felt an intense personal pride in the whole performance. His own share consisted in almost half a column written

by his own hand, and in many names and incidents incorporated in Bob Proctor's story. He pointed out that which he had written to Tom Pope, who read it with courteous attentiveness, and said it was good.

"You're all right, son," Pope assured him. "Sense enough to write what you see."

While Henry was still choking with pride, Charlie Niblo approached them, and he said to Tom meaningfully:

"Don't your throat feel a little bit smoky, Tom?"

"The very thing I was thinking," said Pope, ponderously, rising. He looked toward Henry. "How about you, Henry?"

Henry straightened his shoulders with a quick lift of pleasure. The invitation, he felt, was like an accolade. They went out together, and around the corner into an alley, lighted by a single gas lamp. A grime-obscured sign marked the entrance to an ancient drinking place there, and they entered.

The boy had never before been within this door. He saw in the dim room scattered tables surrounded by small chairs; saw other tables in benched alcoves against the wall. Tom Pope chose one of these alcoves, nodding or speaking to acquaintances about the room. He and Niblo and Henry sat down; and a man in a once-white apron approached them and spoke to Tom in a familiar tone. Tom said amiably:

"The same, Jake!"

Niblo echoed: "The same!"

Jake looked at Henry, and Henry gulped, and Tom said for him: "Ale for the neophyte, Jake. This is Henry Beeker, Esquire."

"Good evening, Mister Beeker," said Jake, as Henry took his hand.

When Jake returned, Henry perceived that the others had ordered whiskey. Ale was a sufficiently novel experience for him. Tom Pope paid; they drank gravely, then relaxed in their chairs and for a little were silent, as though replenishing their physical resources after the fatigue of the day.

"A big story," Charlie said at last.

Tom Pope nodded. "And we did a good job on it, too. Did you read Henry's stuff?"

Charlie assented. "Dryden showed it to me before he sent it along."

Pope looked at Henry, who was bursting. "Dryden says he's going to put you on the street, Henry. Did he tell you?"

Henry shook his head, choking with gratification. "No. I haven't talked to him."

"You'd rather be a reporter, wouldn't you, than clipping papers?"

"Yes."

His glass was not half empty; the ale was an unpleasant dose for him. But Jake approached, and he finished the glass at a gulp, and Jake received new directions. This time Charlie paid.

"Those typewriters are great things," Tom Pope remarked. "I wish they'd come along when I was a youngster."

"They'll make a big change in the game. Speed," Charlie agreed.

"But the best stuff will always be written by hand, I expect."

"Well, I don't know."

"You want to learn to run one," Pope advised Henry. "You're young enough. I'm too old."

"How long have you been working on the *Tribune*?" Henry asked, emboldened by a strange new sensation like an inflation of all his being; and Pope drifted easily into reminiscence. He had begun on a newspaper in a little New Hampshire town, come to Salem, then to Boston. He knew every politician in New England, spoke of them by their first names. Charlie Niblo was reminded of a political coup at Augusta seven years before, and at his bidding Pope told the story while Henry listened with wide eyes. They spoke of the philosophy of politics; the philosophy of journalism marching side by side with it.

"There's a formula in politics," said Pope, with a genial pessimism. "Cuss and promise; promise and cuss. Cuss your opponent and promise your constituents. The loudest promiser and the loudest cusser always wins."

Niblo agreed with him. They cited instances.

"And you not only cuss your opponent; you cuss the newspapers that are for him," Pope added.

"Everybody swears at the newspapers," Niblo assented. Both men recognized, quite without rancor, the disrepute in which their profession was coming to be held. This was a new point of view to Henry; he resented it with a fierce loyalty. In the world from which he had sprung, a newspaper had an oracular and lofty character; for him to become a newspaper man was a step upward. That anyone could look down on spheres which seemed to him so high was incredible.

They listened to him tolerantly, but set him right with perfect assurance. He perceived that he must be wrong.

There had been other drinks; an hour slipped into two.

It abruptly occurred to Henry that Pope and Charlie Niblo had paid for all the drinks; at Jake's next coming, he uncertainly essayed the role. "I'll pay," he said, and produced money; but Pope said kindly:

"Put it away, son. You're our guest tonight."

Henry shook his head. "I want to pay," he insisted, and they perceived that he reckoned it a privilege, and yielded the point with a smile he did not see.

They sat till late, and Henry's senses reeled, and he wondered at the impassibility of the older men, drugged as they were with the strong liquor. But the words they spake he devoured. They talked reminiscence, enlightening each memory with the philosophy of the situation. Their talk was clean; each man had the same ideals, well understood and accepted by the other. But when at last they rose to go, Tom Pope said a little sadly:

"Charlie, if you and I tell our wives we sat here drinking whiskey all evening, they'll think we were talking filth. If we told them what we really talked about, they'd not believe it, eh?"

"That's right," Charlie agreed.

They were precariously steady on their feet. Henry had seen drunkenness heretofore as somehow loathsome; these men had drunk heavily, yet were the more dignified, were somehow finer for the drinking. There was about them something spiritual, as though the liquor had removed the surface roughness with which for daily life they guarded the finer parts of themselves. He himself was not drunk; he had sipped his ale slowly, was merely warmed and elated by it. He had, he thought, held his own in their high company; and he was filled with pride.

Next day he felt badly, but forgot his own feelings when Pat Dryden told him to leave the reference department and consider himself on the city staff.

"And you'll find more money in your envelope," Dryden added. "Now let's see what you can do."

"All right," Henry uncertainly assented. His eyes were shining. "All right, Mr. Dryden."

Dryden returned to his work, and Henry looked about the city room with swimming eyes. It seemed to him, from the eminence of this, his new estate, that he had never justly seen the room before. Until now he had been an underling; now he could meet any man with level eyes.

PART II

THE LOVER

I

Old men are fond of looking backward, but the eyes of youth turn toward the future. After childhood comes the age of ambition, when no task is too severe to be attempted, and no goal seems too remote to be attainable. This is the age of kindling fires. Each thing seen and desired is a spark that may be blown to flame of striving. The young man promises himself: "I will have a house like that some day." "I will be a lawyer like him some day." "I will, one day, do this or that great deed." "Somehow, somewhere, I will find a girl like that for wife." "Thus shall my life be built."

It is not too much to say that all young men are ambitious. So long as they are ambitious, they remain young; and when this striving toward a higher future ceases they become old. The prudent man elects an ambition well within his grasp, achieves it, and rots with contentment; but the wise man chooses for himself a goal he never can attain, and gloriously strives, and ends in splendid failure. It is well that the aims of youth are set so high; it is ill that these ambitions are so often clouded by compromise, or dulled by long and futile striving, or exchanged for others not so high and fine.

Henry Beeker's first great aspiration was to be a reporter like Ben Harris. Harris and George Nye were the only young men he knew; but George was not a figure to inspire emulation. On the other hand, Harris, a representative of a great newspaper and a young man who talked with wise sophistication of the affairs of the world at large, captured Henry's imagination; and he used to sit with avid eyes, listening to Ben, dreaming that some day he, too, would be a reporter.

When he awoke, the morning after the great fire, his first thought was that he was now on an equal footing with Ben. He lay still, relishing this realization, till by and by his sister Mary softly opened his door and looked in; and he spoke to her.

"Hullo!"

"Awake?" she asked. "You were out so late last night. I didn't know. There's breakfast, any time you come down. You can sleep if you're a mind."

She did not come into the room, because she knew his distaste for such domiciliary visits. He was still young enough to feel, under such circumstances, abashed and uncomfortable. Her round face, her eyes behind their round lenses beamed at him doubtfully. Dryden had not yet spoken to him of his promotion; but Tom Pope's prediction was good enough for Henry, and he shouted his news at her, and she stammered:

"Why, Henry! Truly, Henry? Why that's fine."

"I'll be down," he told her. "I'll tell you all about it."

She withdrew, closing the door. While it was open, a smell had entered the room: the smell of bacon, frying. By this Henry knew that it was still early; but he was too full of exultation to lie abed. Dressing, he went downstairs and into the room on the first floor which Mary reserved for her own uses. She and Henry usually ate their meals in this room together, apart from the boarders. Mary had gathered here her few belongings, and the place had vaguely the atmosphere of home; but it could hardly be called comfortable. The iron-hard carpet was like sandpaper beneath their feet; the chairs, save for one squeaky spring rocker, were stiff and severe; the pictures on the wall, even the crayon of Dan Beeker, were unlovely; and the kitchen was too near, so that its odors filled the place. Nevertheless Henry liked it.

When he came downstairs this morning, Mary said: "I waited, to eat with you, Henry."

"I'm good and hungry," he acknowledged.

"There's some finnan haddie, if you want it."

"I guess I'd rather have bacon and eggs."

She went into the kitchen to prepare and fetch their viands. It always pleased her to cook for herself and Henry. She wore, habitually, a tight dress of a black material like satin, with large, billowy loops of the same stuff across the hips; her hair was always neatly done; and she preserved a certain dignity, which she considered becoming to her position. Her venture had proved successful; her boarders were contented, and she was saving money.

When she returned and they were seated, she asked about Henry's promotion. She wished to know what the change would mean, and how it had come about; and Henry told her, the light of dreams in his eyes.

"You remember," he said at last, reminiscently, "when Ben Harris first used to come to our house with George Nye. I

used to say then that I was going to be a reporter, some day, like him."

"I remember," Mary agreed. "You did say that."

"Why say," Henry exclaimed. "I thought Ben was the greatest man in the world, when I was a boy." He was just past nineteen now. "Yes sir, I used to think if I ever got to be like him, I'd be fixed."

"It's fine," said Mary; and her eyes misted a little. "You used to go around after him with your mouth open, fairly. And you used to imitate him, the way he walked, and talked. You were so little, and him so tall. . . . You learned smoking from watching him." She would always remember that fact resentfully.

"I'm pretty near as big as he is, now, though," Henry protested. "Not as tall; but broad."

"If you hadn't smoked . . ."

"And now I'm going to be a reporter the way he is."

"What will you have to do?" Mary asked. "I hope you'll not be out all hours, like you were last night."

"When there's work to do, we've got to do it," Henry reminded her proudly. "If you could fix it so the news would always happen in the daytime, it would be fine. But you can't."

"You're too young to be out so."

"I'm almost twenty."

"I'm always worried when you go to fires," Mary confessed. "People get burned."

"You've got to know where it's safe," Henry explained. "It's all right if you know."

"What kind of work will you have to do, Henry?"

"Whatever Pat Dryden tells me. Accidents, and fires and things like that at first, till I learn how to do bigger jobs. I'm going to handle stuff like Bob Proctor, some day. Or maybe like Tom Pope. I'd like to write about politics, and know the Governor and everybody."

Mary sighed proudly. "It don't seem like you could do it, Henry."

"He's just a man, like anyone else," Henry told her. "'Course, I don't know enough, now. But some day I will."

"It's too bad papa's gone. He'd like to hear you talk."

"I guess so," Henry agreed. He added: "Tom Pope calls the Governor by his first name, sometimes. I guess they're pretty good friends. Tom's known him ever since he first started in politics."

"They'll let you write things for the paper, won't they?"

Henry had a copy of the *Tribune;* he showed it to her. "I

wrote that." he said, pointing. "All of it. I'm going to learn to write on the typewriter, too."

"Those machines that print letters?"

"Yes. I can do it pretty good, now."

Harry Coster, through with his breakfast in the outer darkness of the regular dining room, knocked on the door and came in from the hall, jovially. "Hello, Henry!" he said; and to Mary: "By Gad, you're looking slicker than a dumpling this morning, Miss Beeker."

Mary smiled with faint pleasure; and Henry got to his feet in haste to tell his news.

"By Gad, that's fine," Harry told him heartily. "Yes sir, I congratulate you. My congratulations, old man. Yes sir." He winked at Mary. "The next thing, you'll be running around with the girls, I expect."

"I'm going to be too busy for that," Henry said uncomfortably. "I've got to work pretty hard now."

Coster slapped him on the shoulder. "Say, we ought to celebrate this. The three of us. What do you say?"

Henry was uncertain. "Why . . ."

"What do you say, Miss Beeker?" Coster demanded.

Neither Henry nor Mary had ever celebrated anything. Neither was quite sure just what a celebration implied. Mary moved her head in a way that might have meant assent.

"I'll manage it," Coster cried. "You leave it all to me. Yes sir. We'll have dinner at a place I know. Oysters, and some kidneys, and beer! And I'll—A surprise, afterward. Yes sir. We'll start from here at six o'clock. Now how's that? Is that agreeable to everybody?"

"I have to be here," Mary protested. "I have to watch things."

"Now, now! You can leave it for once. When Henry here rises in the world like this."

"You can go, Mary," Henry urged; and she yielded at last, permitted them to persuade her.

Coster was delighted with himself and with them. "Ready at six!" he repeated. "Mind, now." He assumed a pompous air. "The carriage is at the door, mum!" Added heartily: "We'll show the town a few things tonight. You'll see."

They were both a little relieved when he was gone. "I don't know," said Mary. "I haven't any dress to wear, Henry."

"You look all right that way," he told her.

"A lot you know," Mary protested. "For the evening!"

"You look all right," Henry insisted. "You ask Harry!"

"Don't be foolish, Henry."

"Well, he'd know. He's been around a lot." He rose, folded the copy of the *Tribune* which he had brought downstairs. "Got to be getting downtown," he said importantly.

"I should think they'd let you rest today."

"Pat Dryden said I could stay home. But I guess I'll go down."

She was secretly glad of his departure, since a man about the house in the daytime is after all a sorry nuisance; she watched him depart, her eyes behind the thick lenses dim with pride. But when he was gone she put him from her mind. Harry Coster's invitation had raised problems. Of course Henry did not understand these things; but if she were not properly dressed, Coster would know . . . He was so much a man of the world, so assured in all his ways.

II

Henry had thought he knew the city well; but within a few days after his promotion, he understood that his education was but just begun. The lot of the newest reporter on a paper must always be a busy one. His duties take him into strange places; and Henry was abroad at all hours of the day and night, adventuring into localities of whose existence he had scarcely dreamed.

He learned his way about the waterfront, where he went one morning in December when the ships that came into the Harbor were weighed down with ice, and watched the crew of a fishing boat chop her rigging free, and talked with the frost-bitten captain in the stifling cabin, and heard how seas had swept over and over the schooner as she fought her way to port. "The water was full of ice crystals," the captain said. "You could almost feel them stab you when the spray hit your face. And it froze where it touched; and it ran about the deck thick and stiff as glue and froze there, too. There was hell to pay with us, I tell you, boy!"

He learned the topography of the railroad yards, whither he was sent one night to investigate the matter of a dead

body found upon the tracks. He saw the body, covered with a short sack, lying where it had been found across the rails. "A drunk, asleep under the cars," the yardman told him. "We moved the cars out of here just before midnight; and he prob'ly didn't hear her start." The rain slatted against Henry's face and he shivered convulsively.

He found his way into the mazes of the Chinese homes, piled one upon another in the Chinese quarter; and he climbed many flights of stairs, each one commanded by a loop hole through which, sometimes, a dark eye met his squintingly. And once, after such a climb, he found a room whose walls were gorgeously hung with fine fabrics, in which three heavy-footed policemen moved lumberingly, and where lay the body of a Chinaman with an innocent-appearing slit three-quarters of an inch long in his left breast.

Henry learned the ways of fires, and ate smoke till he was as nearly immune as the firemen themselves. Once he helped a woman, mad with fright, to climb out of her window to a convenient roof and make her escape from flames that seemed to whine with disappointment behind her; and when she was safe, the woman went mad with fright and struck and scratched at him upon the roof tops till others came to help him force her to security. And another time, covering an alarm in the congested part of the South End, he found a family of six persons in two small rooms, where the three children slept on the kitchen floor, the three adults crowded together like beasts in one small bed. They were stupid with starvation when the firemen bore them to the street.

And once a woman chased him half a block with a broom when he went to ask what had become of her daughter, whom the police reported missing; and once, in a lumber mill on the South Bay, he saw three fingers of a man's hand lying in the sawdust on the floor while the man himself was borne away to the hospital. And more than once, at Police Headquarters, he saw men brought in and booked for the crime of murder; and once he saw one of these men, in court, receive the formal sentence of death. In February he was sent with Bob Proctor to New Hampshire, where the Sawtell murder case had just been uncovered; and he helped the Rochester folk search the wooded land along the state line where the body of Hiram Sawtell was found at last in a shallow grave under a pile of pine boughs. Isaac Sawtell, arrested, and brought back and his whole person scrutinized, was discovered to have a spot beneath one finger nail. "It is blood," said a man; and

Isaac cried: "How can it be blood! I washed my hands since this thing happened." When Sawtell was hanged, in September, Henry felt a personal interest in the execution.

He was growing in manhood and in stature, and in pride in the *Tribune*. When the new Hoe presses were installed, presses which cost $50,000 each, which were able to print 48,000 eight-page papers in an hour, and which made the *Tribune* plant the finest in the city, Henry was as boastful as though he had himself designed and paid for them. " 'There are few papers in the country that could afford to spend this amount on two presses,' " he read aloud at home that night to Mary. "Just think of that, Mary." And he showed her the drawings of the presses which the *Tribune* printed. "They won't beat those very soon."

In his spare moments in the office, Henry practised on the typewriter. The older men there were not inclined to welcome these machines; and Tom Pope, who turned in more copy than any man on the paper, always wrote longhand, in pencil. Nevertheless Pope applauded Henry's enterprise.

David Pell had already mastered the typewriter. He was a dependable man; Dryden counted on him for such routine work as banquets, conventions, and meetings of all kinds. These kept him busy in the evenings, so that during the day he had more leisure than the others. Henry remarked that Pell usually occupied such leisure time in reading books, instead of scanning rival newspapers as the other reporters were more apt to do. He spoke to Pell one day about one of these books; asked what it was. David said it was "The Three Musketeers."

"Is it good?" Henry asked.

"I'll lend it to you," Pell suggested, smiling. "I've read it many times. You'd enjoy it."

Henry shook his head. "I'm too busy," he replied. "And at night I'm kind of tired. I don't read much."

"You miss a lot of pleasure," David told him.

"I'm going to write a book, some day," Henry said thoughtfully, old Peter Hendricks suddenly very vivid in his mind. "I guess I ought to read some."

David smiled. "Yes," he agreed.

Henry was silent for a moment. "But I've got to read the newspapers now," he pointed out. "That's a part of my job."

Pell smiled faintly. "Well," he said, "I'd be glad to let you have any books of mine, any time."

"I will, some day," Henry agreed.

He was not at this time particularly close to Pell; his real intimate was Jimmy Horn, whose sophistication he admired and sought to emulate. Jimmy owned a bicycle, and belonged to a Cycle Club in Charlestown, a select organization numbering no more than a dozen young men of Jimmy's own tastes; and one day he suggested that Henry join them in a ride, the following Sunday. Winter was just breaking; spring was not yet fully come and there was still snow in patches on the Common. Henry replied that he had no bicycle; but Jimmy knew where he could hire one.

The plan came to fruition. Henry negotiated the rental of a machine which, damaged in a collision, had been repaired sufficiently to make it workable. It was a safety, the front wheel only slightly larger than the rear, and Henry took it home Saturday afternoon, riding carefully through the traffic of the downtown streets. Next morning Jimmy Horn and two other fellows of his age stopped before the boarding house and rang their bells till Henry appeared. They rode out Huntington Avenue, and Washington Street and Beacon to the Reservoir; and at the Rendezvous they foregathered with others—hundreds of others, it seemed to Henry—and talked, leaning against the fence, and ate sandwiches, and smoked, and at last rode home again.

The next time he rented the wheel, the dealer said to him: "You ought to buy that wheel. I'd make you a good price."

Henry shook his head. "I guess I couldn't afford it."

"I could make it cheap to you."

As a matter of fact, since Mary's success with the boarding house, Henry had attained a certain financial independence. "How much?" he asked the dealer. The figure named, he perceived, was within his reach. "I could pay you a week at a time," he suggested, his heart pounding at his own temerity.

The arrangement was concluded. Henry was at first afraid to confess to Mary; but when he did so, she wept happily, and assured him she was glad. "I want you should have things, Henry," she told him. "The same as other boys. I want you to have fun, too."

He kept the bicycle in the basement rear entry, and spent all his hours at home tinkering with it, oiling and polishing till it shone. He told himself that when the wheel was paid

for, he would buy one for Mary, too; and grinned at thought of Mary upon a bicycle.

3

One Sunday night Henry came home from an all day ride with Jimmy Horn and his friends. They had taken bottled beer and sandwiches, and Henry, inflated with his own maturity, had drunk more beer than was good for him. The day had been warm, one of those sultry days which sometimes come in May; and the exertion of pedalling homeward made him sick. He was physically miserable when he pushed his wheel into the rear entry and went into the house. His intention was to go upstairs to his room and lie down; but as he passed the open door of Mary's sitting room, she called him.

"Henry! Is that you, Henry?"

He answered sullenly; and she came to the door and met him. "You're late, Henry," she said. Over her shoulder he saw Harry Coster, sitting at ease in one of the stiff chairs. Then Mary cried:

"Why, you're as pale! Are you sick, Henry?"

He shook his head. "I'm all right."

She put her hand on his forehead, sweaty and cold; and he shuddered. Then Coster, behind her, laughed aloud.

"Henry's been hitting it up," he exclaimed delightedly. "The boy's been travelling."

"You smell nasty, Henry," Mary protested.

"It's beer," Coster told her. "Just plain beer. He'll be all right when he's had a little sleep. You go upstairs, young fellow, and wet your head and go to bed."

"Oh Henry!" she cried reproachfully.

"Beer never hurt anyone," he insisted, swaying weakly.

Coster defended him. "Now Mary, let him alone." Henry was too sick to remark that he had never heard Coster call his sister Mary before.

"Let me alone," he echoed. "I'm going to bed."

"You oughtn't to drink beer, Henry," she insisted pleadingly.

"Well, I guess everybody drinks beer."

"It won't hurt him," Coster said again. "Do him good. Let the boy alone. He's got to learn his way around, Mary. Beer never hurt anyone."

"It makes me so unhappy," she protested miserably. "He can have a good time without that."

"I can't have a good time with you always nagging at me," Henry said sullenly.

"Why Henry! You know I just want you to do the right thing."

Coster laughed. "Oh, now, Mary, don't lecture him. Come on; let him go to bed."

"But he looks sick. Are you sick, Henry?"

"No, I'm not sick. Just sleepy."

Coster slapped him on the back, and Henry trembled with misery at the touch. "Run along upstairs, son."

"I'll come and see that you're all right," Mary told him.

"Oh, can't you leave me alone," Henry protested. "I guess I can take care of myself." He was starting for the stair.

"Why, Henry!" Her tone was pitiful.

"Well, you're always after me . . ."

He was glad to leave them below; but as he reached the foot of the second flight, he heard Coster say: "You've got to expect him to run around with fellows his age, do what they do. Don't let it bother you."

Henry was ungrateful enough to resent Coster's partisanship, and if the latter had not been there, would no doubt have welcomed Mary's attention. But since Coster was there. . . . Coster was much with Mary of late, he remembered. A curious preference on the part of that young man, whose room was filled with photographs of girls so much better looking than poor Mary. But Henry was too much concerned with his own miseries to wonder about this.

Next morning at breakfast Mary asked him reproachfully whether he felt better; she referred, once or twice during the week that followed, to what had passed between them. The effect of these reminders was to rouse in Henry a sullen resentment; so that when Jimmy Horn proposed another excursion for the following Sunday, he accepted.

"We'll dodge the others," Jimmy told him. "I know a couple of girls that have wheels, and we'll get them to fix up lunch for us and spend the day somewhere."

"Girls!" Henry echoed doubtfully. Since his boyhood he had hardly spoken to a girl except as a matter of business. The waitress in the boarding house, or at the restaurant where he ate lunch; the maids at houses to which business occasionally took him; these were his only contacts with the other sex. He saw girls about him everywhere; but they belonged to another world, attracting his attention only remotely and when his thoughts were not otherwise directed.

"Sure," Jimmy assured him. "They're all right, too."

"I don't know," Henry said, full of hesitation.

"You don't have to know," Jimmy told him. "I'll take care of everything. You let me look out for you, Hank." Henry had never been called Hank before, and was vaguely flattered.

"Where'll we go?" he asked.

"I know a good place. About fifteen miles. We'll stay till after supper and come home after dark."

"Won't they have to get home early?"

"Say," Jimmy assured him. "The girls I take on a ride don't have to get home at all."

Henry was full of misgivings; but he was also moved by an unwilling curiosity. In the end he accepted Jimmy's plan.

4

They would meet the girls, Jimmy told him Saturday, at one of the gates of the Public Garden; and Sunday morning they met as they had planned. Introductions were soon done. "This is Hazel, and she's my girl," said Jimmy. "That's Nellie, and she's yours."

Henry muttered something and the two girls said demurely: "Pleased to meet you, Mr. Beeker."

"Henry's his name," Jimmy told them jocularly. "Come on now, we don't want to sit in the Garden all day."

Henry, tonguetied and paralyzed with embarrassment, was relieved when they were under way. The perfect assurance of the two girls seemed to him physically shocking; he felt as though he had been slapped in the face, and as they turned out Huntington Avenue, he was so silent that Nellie, whom Jimmy had called Henry's girl, pedalled forward to ride abreast of the other two, and Henry, trailing ignominiously behind, heard her complain to Jimmy:

"Your friend don't have much to say for himself."

Henry could not hear Jimmy's reply; but the girl's remark somewhat emboldened him. He recovered, by slow degrees, his courage; and when the road widened he rode beside them. They passed the Rendezvous and pushed on for another hour, till Jimmy turned aside down a little used road, and at length swung off his wheel where the road crossed a wooded knoll, surrounded by marshy ground with water beyond. "It's the river," Jimmy told them. "It circles in around here. Hazel and I found this place one day. Remember, Hazel?"

Hazel giggled, and Jimmy caught her and kissed her; she

poked him away with awkward, disingenuous motions. Jimmy called to Henry: "Come on, you and Nellie get acquainted now."

"Oh, I guess we're acquainted, all right," Henry uncomfortably replied.

"He's bashful, Nellie," Hazel cried. "You'll have to educate him."

Henry and Jimmy had tied behind the seats of their machines baskets containing beer which Jimmy had secured. Henry busied himself unfastening the cords. "We got to get these things unpacked," he said defensively.

They pushed their wheels off the road among the trees and disposed them there; then, laden with edibles and drinkables, went along the knoll till they reached its end. The trees broke away here in low shrubbery; the river curved in and touched the shore at their feet. They found a patch of sward, littered with bits of paper and the traces of former picnics, and deposited their burdens. Henry was acutely uncomfortable; but during the bustle of these preparations he somewhat recovered his composure. They were all hungry, and they ate hungrily. Nellie passed him sandwiches, opened a bottle of beer for him, paid him such little attentions as the situation suggested. There was a good deal of talk among the others. The jokes they made, and the amusement they derived from these jests seemed to him curiously hollow; but he sought to be as they were.

After a while, Jimmy stretched himself and swung around and lay down, his head on Hazel's lap. "I'm going to sleep," he announced pompously. "Keep the sun out of my eyes."

"I will not," Hazel told him hotly. "Take your head off my skirt. Your hair's oily." She picked up a bit of paper that had been wrapped about the sandwiches and put it under his head. "There!" Abruptly bent, her arms about his neck, and kissed him. Jimmy pretended not to like this.

"I never could stand an upside down kiss," he cried. "Your nose stuck into my chin."

"Well, if you don't like them!" Hazel pouted; but Jimmy dragged her head down again, and they giggled together.

Nellie caught Henry's eye. "Want me to make a pillow for you?" she asked, smiling a little.

Henry shook his head. "I'm not sleepy," he told her, sitting carefully erect.

"Oh, all right!" She got up to brush the crumbs from her skirt, and sat down again a little further from him.

Hazel was not comfortable; she shifted her position till she

was half reclining, Jimmy's head resting on her body, her arm across his shoulders. The sun began to strike in upon them, and they all moved to follow the shade.

Henry was more and more miserable; he wondered how long they would stay here, whether they would not soon start back for the city. He said to Nellie once: "There are some blue flowers, down there by the water. Want me to get them for you?" Nellie shrugged her shoulders and replied: "Oh, don't bother yourself."

He perceived that she was piqued, and knew that she wished him to imitate Jimmy. Jimmy looked across at him and called: "Say Hank, ain't you getting lonesome? All by yourself that way. Nellie's here!"

Henry laughed sheepishly at Nellie; and Hazel giggled: "He's bashful with us here. Let's take a walk, Jimmy." Jimmy whispered something to her; and she rocked with foolish mirth. Then they rose and departed through the underbrush. "Be nice to him, Nellie," Hazel called over her shoulder; then she and Jimmy whispered together again, and disappeared, still laughing.

Henry looked at his companion, but she did not look at him. He asked: "You want to take a walk?"

"I'm comfortable," she replied austerely.

"All right," Henry assented. He dug at the dirt between his knees with a broken stick; and she watched him sidewise, and at length relented enough to rise and come and sit beside him. He felt her there, and held himself rigidly.

"Come on," she suggested wheedling. "I won't bite you."

Henry tried to laugh. "Oh, I'm not afraid of you."

"Well you act as if you was."

"Well, I'm not."

"I'm not used to fellows not wanting me near them," she said stiffly.

"Why, I don't mind," Henry stammered.

She laughed suddenly, and so far as he could see, without cause. But she said nothing more, and at last he felt himself forced into an attempt at conversation. "What's your last name?" he asked.

"Don't you like my first name?"

"Why, yes. Yes."

"It's Morgan, if you want to know."

"Jimmy didn't tell me," Henry said apologetically.

She studied him. "You don't go around with Jimmy very much, do you?"

He was surprised. "Why, yes. What makes you say that?"

"You don't act like he does," she replied; and surprisingly, laughed again. A swamp blackbird called gratingly in the marsh below them; he watched it and at length saw it steal to a hidden nest. This interested him, and he pointed it out to her.

"Behind that bunch of cat tails," he explained.

"Well, what of it?" she demanded. Smiled at him. "Wouldn't you rather look at me than an old blackbird?"

"I never saw one's nest before," he apologized; and she got angrily to her feet. "Don't get mad," he begged.

"Mad?" Her cheeks were flaming. Then she sat down once more. "Say," she challenged. "I'll bet you never kissed a girl in your life."

"I have too," Henry cried.

"I'll bet you never did."

"I did, so."

"I dare you to kiss me, then," she challenged. "What makes you get so red? Not afraid, are you?"

For answer he grappled with her—there is no other word—and kissed her awkwardly upon the cheek. "There," he told her.

"Well for goodness sake, don't you know any better than that?" she demanded angrily. Wiped her cheek with her hand. "You like to bit me."

"Oh!"

"That's no way!" She smiled on him again. "You don't want to hurt a girl. You! I'll bet you never kissed the same girl twice, if that's the way you act."

Henry's courage was exhausted by his one essay. He heard voices on the road by which they had come. "Someone's coming," he said.

"They're just riding by," she assured him.

"Oh," said Henry.

She gave him up at last; withdrew from him and lay down in the shade, her head pillowed on her hand. "I guess I might as well go to sleep," she said, and yawned insultingly.

"All right," Henry consented, fearful lest she change her mind. She composed herself with little wriggling movements, adjusting her body to the inequalities of the ground; and presently Henry was sure she really slept. He breathed more freely; and at length himself leaned back, his hands upon his head, and looked upward, finding a curious pleasure and comfort in the clean blue sky.

By and by—it may have been an hour, but it seemed longer—he heard Jimmy and Hazel returning. Nellie waked at their

coming, and rose, rubbing her eyes; and she looked from Henry to them and back at Henry again.

"I'm going home," she announced abruptly.

Jimmy protested at this. "Why, not now," he cried. "There's a moon tonight; and you said you'd stay."

"I won't stay with him," she declared, pointing to Henry.

Jimmy whirled on his friend. "What did you do?" he demanded.

"I didn't do a thing," Henry protested, the picture of guilty shame.

Hazel put her arms around her friend, whispering to her; they faced Jimmy arm in arm. "We're both going home," Hazel told him decisively.

"Say, what has Hank done?" Jimmy insisted, in all bewilderment.

"I guess he's not used to the company of ladies," said Nellie chillingly.

So they pedalled the long way back to the city, the two girls on either side of a resentful Jimmy, Henry Beeker trailing humbly in the rear. He knew, vaguely, that he ought to take Nellie home, but lacked courage for the adventure. In the throng of other wheelmen, bound homeward from the Reservoir, he dropped behind them; and from a distance he saw another boy hail Jimmy and attach himself to the party.

So Henry was left free to slink home alone. He felt himself in some incomprehensible fashion disgraced and put to shame.

5

One result of this excursion was to disrupt his growing intimacy with Jimmy Horn. Jimmy told the story of that Sunday afternoon to those of his intimates who were fit to appreciate it; and among them Henry became a subject for jest. The older men in the office, Tom Pope, Bob Proctor, Charlie Niblo, heard Jimmy's version of what had happened, and grinned at Henry, in a friendly fashion enough. He was not sure whether they scorned him or no.

But a few days later he got reassurance, and from an authoritative source. Pat Dryden called him to the desk one day, when there was a lull, and began to ask him questions. "You live with your folks?" he inquired.

"With my sister," said Henry. "She runs a boarding house."

"Where's your father; your mother?"

"They're dead," Henry replied.

Dryden was faintly embarrassed; covered his confusion by an increasing curtness. "That's too bad," he commented. Then he asked: "You and Jimmy Horn pretty good friends?"

"I guess so," Henry replied.

Dryden became judicial. "Jimmy's all right," he said. "He can go out and get a story; but he can't write. I wouldn't tie up with him, if I were you. He's the sort that will go along the same way all his life and never get anywhere. You've got some idea of how to write a story; and you look like a pretty decent man. I wouldn't knock around much with Jimmy if I were you."

"Jimmy's all right," Henry said defensively.

Dryden hesitated. "I wouldn't let him worry me, if I were you," he advised at last; and turned back to his desk in sign that he had no more to say. Henry felt better after that interview.

The succeeding weeks completed his emancipation from the influence of Jimmy Horn; but they left Henry more or less alone in the office. The older men were friendly enough; but he was, after all, only a boy; had yet to earn his spurs. And he had a boy's longing for friendships. Once he wrote a letter to Sam Russell; but Sam did not reply. Henry understood that Sam was not likely to be a letter writer; he wrote again, asking if he might come to the Russell farm for his vacation. This time Sam answered that his mother was sick and they could not welcome Henry. Henry felt more than ever alone. When his vacation came, he went to board in Ponkapoag. The only other boarder of his own age and sex was a young Englishman, a London Cockney with consumption, who had come to this country a year before and worked in a laundry in the city. The two were much together; and Henry found the other's viewpoint interesting. The Englishman had that bright color which is so often a symptom of his disease; his teeth were blackened and bad and is countenance was unprepossessing. He spent most of his time in a straight chair which he carried from the dining room out into the orchard. Henry used to lie on the ground beside him half a day at a time. The Cockney had worked hard since he was twelve years old, earning four to six shillings a week and giving it all to the support of his family; the death of his mother emancipated him, and he started at once to save money so that he might come to the United States. Here he found work almost at once, at a salary of eleven dollars a week, and now lived luxuriously and pointed with some pride to the fact that he was able to come to the country for his vacation.

"But I was always a lucky one," he commented, complacently reviewing his own good fortune.

Henry vaguely felt that the man was a tragic figure.

He had here also a taste of the company of womenfolk. The boarding house accommodated twelve people, of whom nine were women, their ages varying from thirty upward. The third man was in his fifties, a broken-down bookkeeper, in whom Henry found nothing interesting; but the women he watched with some curiosity, for Mary's boarders were all men. He thought the volume of their conversation appalling; and he found their comments on each other cruel yet amusing. One of the youngest of them angled for an invitation to go walking with him; but Henry obtusely refused to understand. They considered him a nice-looking boy, but dull. It was a relief to get back to the office and to his room at home.

Soon after his return, an incident occurred which was to affect Henry's life profoundly. The thing happened Saturday evening; a dull hour when the day's work was done, and the men stood or sat about the City Room, smoking and talking together. Henry stopped at Tom Pope's desk to hear a story Tom was telling; it was the story of the goat which ate a red flannel shirt, was overtaken by a train in a railroad cut, and threw up the shirt to flag the train. Henry and Bob Proctor and David Pell, who were listening, laughed with delight at Tom's rendition. Then Pat Dryden called Proctor away. The talk wandered, died and was born again to die once more. Pell went to his own desk to write a letter, and after a little silence Tom Pope asked Henry:

"You and Dave see much of each other, Henry?"

Henry shook his head. "Just here in the office."

"Dave's going to be a good man some day," Pope said. "He's slow and careful; but he has a way of getting people to talk to him, because they like him. Some reporters go at a man as though he were a crook and they were policemen. Dave just says: 'Here, I'm a *Tribune* reporter. I want to know so and so.' And they tell him. He's a nice boy, Dave is."

"I guess he is, all right," Henry agreed.

"He lives alone, you know," Pope said. "Boards. You watch his stories, though. He's all right."

This casual talk turned Henry's attention again to David Pell; he began, in a diffident way, to cultivate the other. Pell was naturally friendly; he had a gentleness of nature which made him somewhat of an outsider among the younger men on the *Tribune*. Henry liked him; and Pell liked Henry. One

evening they had supper together, and afterwards, at Pell's suggestion, went to his room. There were books piled on the lower part of his small table; a single volume edition of Shakespeare, some Dumas and Hugo, and most of Dickens and Scott. Henry examined one or two of the books curiously. He picked up "The Tale of Two Cities" and found that the covers were broken.

Pell apologized. "I ought to have a book case," he said, "but there's no room for one, here."

Henry surveyed the room with a professional eye. "My sister keeps a boarding house," he said. "What do you have to pay here?" David told him. "You could get a bigger room at our place," Henry said.

"I've been thinking of moving," Pell confessed.

"Why don't you come and see the room opposite mine?" Henry suggested. "It's empty now. They'll fill up quick in a week or two, when folks come back to town."

And thus casually it came about that Pell did move to Mary's establishment. He took the front room on the floor where Henry himself lived. The arrangement threw the two young men much together.

One night, at Pell's suggestion, Henry took "Ninety-Three." to read; and that winter, through the portals which Pell's volumes opened, he entered into a new world.

III

Perhaps it was his more frequent contacts with David Pell that made Henry grow to dislike Harry Coster. It was difficult for him to discover the beginning of this feeling on his part. He had at first heartily admired the big young man; had admired and liked him too. He perceived no graduations in this feeling of his until one morning when he came downstairs to breakfast and found Harry at the table with Mary.

"I thought it would be nice if he had breakfast with us, Henry," Mary explained, in some confusion.

And Henry knew at once that he disliked Coster.

The dislike may have had its root in some suddenly awakened jealousy; but he did not analyze his own sensations. At

the moment, he merely ate his breakfast more silently than usual, while Coster talked much and rather loudly and Mary laughed at him. Afterwards, Henry met David Pell in the hall and the two went to the office together; and Henry was too busy to think of Coster all that day. It happened—a boarding house may be as lonely as a desert island—that he did not encounter the man for a number of days thereafter; and when they did meet again Henry was puzzled to account for his own resentment at the other's very presence there.

But if Henry disliked the big boarder, Mary liked him more and more. One day she quoted Harry's opinion on a matter of marketing. "He says I can do better down at Faneuil Hall," she told Henry. "But it's so far."

Henry grunted. "I'd like to know what he knows about it," he protested.

"He knows so many things," Mary replied, a little wistfully.

Mary had adopted as a sort of uniform a black dress of satin-like material, unrelieved by any touch of color. Since she had responsibilities and powers, her person had improved; she no longer seemed to Henry so dumpy, and her hair, which is so quick to mirror the physical condition of a woman, had a gloss that it had never worn before. Even her eyes had somewhat strengthened; there were times when she laid aside her glasses, yet escaped the headaches which such violation of routine had used to bring. The revolution in her physical appearance had been no sudden thing; it had come slowly, so that Henry failed to perceive how complete it was. But one evening in early spring she appeared at the supper table in a white waist with wide sleeves, and with a red ribbon threaded through her high collar, and tied in a bow in front.

Henry was so astonished that he said tactlessly: "Why Mary, you look mighty nice. I wouldn't know you."

Mary smiled with the pleasure of a girl. "Do I, Henry?"

"Yes sir. You ought to dress up that way more."

"I think I will, Henry."

He put his arm around her shoulders, an affectionate demonstration exceedingly rare in their relations to each other. She bridled a little, and he kissed her on the cheek. "Yes sir, you look kind of pretty," he assured her, in an astonished tone.

"I'm going to the theatre tonight with Harry," Mary explained. "So I thought I'd dress up a little bit."

Henry felt himself stiffen with resentment. "Harry Coster?" he asked, mechanically.

"Why, yes."

"Oh!"

She felt his displeasure so keenly that the tears came to her eyes; but they sat down at the table with no further word. After a while, watching his averted countenance, she asked: "You don't mind, do you, Henry?"

He invented a lie to hurt her, with that instinct to give pain for pain which is so often a part of love. "I was going to ask you to go with me," he said.

"Why, Henry! I'm sorry! You never did before. . . . You come with us, Henry. Harry'd like to have you."

"Oh, I guess I'd spoil your party," he replied sullenly, expecting her to deny this, to insist on his coming.

But she did not insist; merely said: "I'd like to go with you some other time, though."

"Maybe," he replied.

For a considerable interval thereafter, neither of them spoke. But Henry's thoughts were busy. A fugitive memory of Mrs. Bassett came to his mind; she had said that a girl was unwise to marry a big man . . . Harry was a big man. But of course it was foolish to think of Harry marrying Mary Beeker; Harry, who had so many photographs of attractive girls arranged about his room. Nevertheless the thought persisted; and Henry blurted at last:

"What are you going around all the time with Harry Coster for?"

Mary hesitated. "Why, he asks me," she replied.

"Well, you don't have to go just because he asks you."

"I—" She checked herself. "I don't like to hurt his feelings, when he's so nice."

"You like to go with him," he said accusingly. "I know."

"Why Henry, I'd rather go with you."

"You would not." He pushed himself back from the table with a gesture as savage as a threat. "I suppose you've got to do anything he asks you. I suppose if he asked you to marry him, you would."

Her cheeks were crimson. "Henry!" she protested.

"He's about half as old as you," said Henry brutally.

"I'm only thirty-four," Mary pleaded.

"Only!" he jeered. Himself was not yet twenty-one. Age is a relative matter.

Mary strengthened her defenses. "Besides, you're silly," she told him. "He hasn't asked me; and there's no reason why he should. But if he's nice to me, I don't see why I shouldn't have a little happiness, Henry. I'm always glad when you do." Her

courage weakened, her eyes filled again. "You hurt me, Henry."

Henry was already ashamed of himself; but he was helpless in the grip of a passion he could not understand. It was his first experience of jealousy. He had never rated Mary very high; but she was the only woman in his world, and we cling to our womankind, to sisters and to mothers as well as to sweethearts and wives. Cling to them jealously. He wished to hurt Mary; he wished to destroy Harry Coster; and when the man himself knocked at the door and came in without waiting for a summons, Henry could hardly bear to look at him. He rose and stalked away.

As he brushed past the other, Coster exclaimed: "Hey, Henry! What you mad about?"

Henry said harshly: "Oh, shut up!"

He heard Mary's murmur of protest before the door closed behind him; heard Harry Coster laugh. For a moment he stood in the hall, his own eyes filled with scalding tears; then he raced up the stairs to his own room.

A little later, somewhat composed, he sought David Pell and confided in him. "She's just foolish about him," he concluded. "And Mary's too old to be such a darned fool."

Pell was years older than Henry; old enough so that he had a different perspective in this matter of age. "She's not so old as she seems to you, Hank," he said, meaning this as a reassurance.

"Well, she's older than he is."

"I don't know him," Pell said thoughtfully. "What's the matter with him? He looks all right."

"Oh, he's all right when you first know him," Henry assented.

"Well, I don't see that you need worry much anyway," Pell suggested. "He's only taking her to the theatre."

"She's got a red ribbon on," Henry replied irrelevantly; and David smiled.

But the event was to prove that Henry's instinctive jealousy had good grounds. Late in May, with Harry Coster at her side, Mary told Henry that they were to be married. He made no protest; simply said: "All right. I don't see what you have to tell me for. I can find a room somewhere."

Mary wailed: "Why Henry, I'll still take care of you . . ." She appealed to Coster. "Won't we, Harry?"

"Sure will," he assured her. "Come on, Henry. You'll get used to it. I won't make a bad brother-in-law."

Henry had a vague sense that something was expected of him; but all he could say was: "Oh, all right!"

Their marriage, early in June, was extremely quiet. The two, with Henry and David Pell as witnesses, went to the pastor of Mary's nearby church and were married in the parlor of his home. Then Harry gave them all a dinner at the Parker House, and they drank champagne. Mary was almost pretty. Afterwards Coster and his bride went to Nantasket, where they would stay for a few days, in a furnished room; and David and Henry returned to the boarding house.

David was able to guess some of Henry's loneliness; he made an effort to cheer the boy, but Henry rebuffed him, and Pell had the wisdom to accept this rebuff. At his door he said good night, and Henry went to his room alone. Utterly alone. His father was gone, and his mother, and Nancy; and now Mary, too, was gone from him.

He wept at last, from loneliness; and slept upon his dampened pillow.

2

That summer was to prove a revolutionary period in Henry's life. His sister's marriage was in itself sufficient to overturn his whole world; he felt that the very roots of his life had been torn and bruised. When she and her husband came home, Henry went at first to the length of calling her Mrs. Coster, but at sight of her grief he was repentant, and the two had something like a reconciliation. The marriage made surprisingly little surface difference in their lives. Mary had refurnished two large rooms on the second floor of the boarding house, and she and Harry moved into them, but for the rest, things went on as usual. Coster was away all day at the office where he was employed; Mary went about her tasks of ordering and superintending the routine of the boarding house. She resumed her black uniform; and it was only at supper time that for Harry's benefit she put on less sombre garments, and bloomed for him again. Mary urged Henry still to have his meals with them; but he could not endure this, and joined David Pell in the general dining room.

If this change in his life at home were not sufficient to make the summer memorable to Henry, there were other influences. The city itself, the city that was his world, was changing. The familiar horse cars were giving way to electric cars which appeared in greater numbers day by day. Henry and David Pell sometimes spent an evening riding upon the

new conveyances, thrilling with that love of speed which most men have. When it was possible, they rode upon the front platform; a precarious perch with no shelter against the wind or weather, and no gates at the side, so that when the cars swung around a corner it was easy to be thrown off balance. They were not alone in this pleasure; the platforms were apt to be crowded, and now and then accidents occurred. The *Tribune* one day printed an editorial condemning the practice for its danger, yet confessing: "There is an exhilaration in being carried on this part of the car which has a fascination for many, especially young men." But the editorial deterred neither Henry nor David Pell, till the novelty, in the natural course of events, began to lose its charm.

There was under way, also, a revolution in the newspaper world. A new figure had appeared in the field; had purchased one of the local papers and stimulated it to sudden growth. The effect was felt in the other offices; there was a quickening of the pace everywhere. Figures long familiar disappeared, giving way to younger men. Pat Dryden adapted himself to the changed conditions; and the *Tribune* responded to his spur. Headlines began to increase in size; stories which had hitherto perished in the obscurity of an inner page saw for the first time the light of day. The *Tribune* had always been rated conservative, and it remained so; yet even the *Tribune* was less conservative than it had been before.

Ben Harris profited by this revolution of which he had long been a prophet. Ben was to some extent a marked figure in the newspaper life of the city; for years he had been advocating a livelier handling of the news; an emphasis on stories which had a wide appeal, rather than on those which were news in the stricter sense of the word.

"I remember when he first used to come to our house," Henry told David Pell. "I remember he used to say then that if you'd print more about fires, and murders and things, you'd sell more papers."

Pell assented. "I know," he replied. "I've heard Ben talk, too. Of course they can sell more papers, that way. But is it worth while?"

The two were discussing the rumor, current that morning, that Ben Harris had been made city editor of the *Standard*, where he had found work when Pat Dryden discharged him. The rumor was before noon confirmed; within a day or two its truth was manifest in the *Standard*'s columns. A new scale of newspaper values had come into force.

Henry and David Pell had more than one discussion of

the justice of these new values. The fact that the *Standard* was gaining circulation became manifest. This seemed to Henry proof that Ben was right; but David dissented.

"These stories are not news," he insisted, pointing to the *Standard*'s front page. "They're interesting, entertaining perhaps; but they're not news, and you can't go back of that."

Henry was still uncertain in his own mind when at noon one day he encountered Ben Harris himself. He had not seen Harris for months; and Ben exclaimed at sight of him.

"Say, Henry, you're thickening up some, aren't you! How old are you now, anyway?"

"Almost twenty-one," Henry told him. "I am getting heavier, yes."

"I was talking to Pat Dryden the other day. He says you're doing well." Henry flushed with pleasure. "I say, Henry," Ben continued. "Come and have lunch with me. Or have you eaten?"

"I was just going to," Henry replied.

"Come along, then." It was not so much an invitation as a command, and Henry obeyed. When they faced each other across the scrubbed wooden table, and had given their orders, Ben said: "I haven't seen you for quite a while."

"That's right," Henry assented. He grinned. "But I've been watching the *Standard* since you took hold. I'd know you were there, all right."

"We've gained sixty-two per cent in circulation since I started," said Ben simply.

Henry echoed: "Honestly!"

Ben nodded with satisfaction. "Show you the books if you like," he offered. Leaned across the table. "Say, Henry, why don't you come to work for me?"

Henry was startled. Such a possibility had not occurred to him. He was not of an adventurous disposition, was rather inclined to the safer way. "Why, I don't know," he replied.

"What are they paying you?" Ben asked. Henry told him; and Ben looked faintly surprised. "Why, that's pretty good," he remarked. "I can't pay you any more right away; but if things keep up, the *Standard*'s going to make a lot of money, and we'll all get a share of it."

"I never thought of it," Henry said. "I like the *Tribune* pretty well."

"They're all right," Ben agreed. "I'm not saying a word against Pat Dryden, or any of them. Pat did right to let me go. I wouldn't write the sort of stuff he wanted. But I'm making the *Standard* a different kind of paper, Henry. You ought

to come and help me. I can boost you along. I always kind of liked you, Henry, you know." His tone was straightforward and friendly.

Henry said slowly: "You're making circulation, Ben. But maybe you're not going to be able to keep it."

"I'll keep it, all right," Ben replied.

"It's something new; that's all," Henry suggested.

His editorial technique thus attacked, Ben took up the cudgels, warmed to the subject. "The trouble with you, Henry," he replied, "you've got the *Tribune* ideas. The *Tribune* is a newspaper, I admit. Maybe the *Standard* isn't a newspaper at all. That's the point you don't get. Just because a thing has always been called a newspaper doesn't mean that it can't print anything but news, does it? There'll always be newspapers, Henry; and they'll print the news. All about Europe, and Washington, and the rest of the world. And there'll always be a few people to read what they print. Twenty or thirty or forty thousand of them in a place like this, say.

"But that doesn't mean there won't be other kinds of papers, Henry. Maybe we'll have to think up a new name for them. Or it may come naturally, some day. They won't be newspapers. Oh, they'll print the news; the real news. You'll always be able to find it if you look for it. But unless it's interesting, interesting to a lot of people, it won't be emphasized. This kind of paper I've got in mind will set out to interest and amuse as many people as possible, Henry. You can't judge it by newspaper standards. It won't really be a newspaper at all; it will be printing interesting stories from real life, whether they're important or not. So long as they're interesting.

"I led the *Standard* the other day with a divorce case, and printed some testimony. There wasn't another paper in town that had a line on it; yet any of them could have had it by going up to the Court House; and the people were crazy to read about it. That's what I'm trying to do, Henry. Give the people something that will interest them, to read. Let me tell you, I think it's a lot better for folks to read a paper like mine than not to read a paper at all. And if the papers were all like the *Tribune*, these folks wouldn't read any paper. Just reading is good for people; it doesn't much matter what they read. You'll see what I mean, some day."

Henry would have spoken, but Ben overbore him, hurrying on.

"Why, Henry," he said. "There's going to be a big change

in newspapers in a few years. Yes, sir. You'll see a lot of papers following the same formula I'm following. Oh, it's no experiment. It's been tried in New York, and St. Louis, and Chicago, and it works. Print stories about funny things, and about pretty women, and about money, and murders, and burglars and crooks; and print all the stories you can get about things that happen right here in town. That's what people like to read about. Things that happen near home. Things they've maybe seen happen, or heard about before they read about them. I wish I could print pictures. Not drawings, but real pictures. Pretty ones. We'll be able to, some day; able to print pictures of pretty women. When we can do that, I'm going to have a picture of a pretty woman on every page of the *Standard*. Everybody likes to look at a picture of a pretty woman. The women like to see how ugly she is, and the men like to see how pretty she is. And jokes. Everybody likes to hear a funny story. I'm going to print every funny story I can get hold of."

He paused, collected himself. "Well, there you are, Henry. That may not be a newspaper; but it's a paper that will interest a lot of people, and they'll buy it, and we'll make money, and it won't do anybody any harm. Now what's wrong with that?"

He waited for Henry to answer; and after a while Henry said: "I never thought much about it."

"Well, think about it now," Ben grinned good humoredly. "It sounds all right."

Ben pushed away his plate and ordered pie and coffee. "It is all right, Henry," he insisted. "You take my advice. Come and work for me. I'll help you along, and you'll make more money in the end, and you'll have a lot more fun."

"I don't know," Henry murmured.

"There's no hurry," Ben told him. "Take your time. Let me know in a day or two; or any time you want to come over, just let me know. There'll always be a job on the hook for you. I always liked you, Henry."

Henry smiled. "I remember, when you first used to come to the house, I used to say that some day I'd be a reporter like you," he confessed.

Ben was faintly embarrassed. "That so?" he asked. "Well, you've grown some since then, all right." He was suddenly reminded of something. "By the way, do you ever see George Nye?"

Henry shook his head. "Not since— Well, not since my father died, I guess."

"You saw about his wife, didn't you? In the morning papers."

"No."

"Shot herself, in New York," Ben told him. "Didn't you see it? They were all asleep on the story. I'm spreading it all over the front page," he chuckled. "Of course, she was living under her own name. On the street, too. She got all George's money and then skipped out. I guess she got to taking drugs. If I hadn't happened to know her, and know George, I wouldn't have spotted the story. Lots of people in town know her. They'll eat it up." He spoke in headlines. "Local Girl Suicide. Deserted Husband Here."

"George?" Henry echoed uncertainly.

"Yes, I haven't seen him; but I guess he's around town."

"Are you printing his name, too?"

"Yes. Certainly. Every local angle helps, on a story like this."

Henry was confused. "Won't it make him feel bad?"

"Damn it," said Ben, flushing a little. "It's the news. We've got to print the news."

Henry had a moment's clear thought. "You said a while ago you weren't trying to print the news," he reminded the young editor. "You said you wouldn't print news unless it was interesting. And you said yourself news was Europe, and Washington, and so on . . ."

"You don't see what I mean," Ben argued. "Besides, a story like this. . . . If someone you knew killed themselves, you'd be interested, wouldn't you. You'll get a *Standard* and read about George's wife, won't you?"

"I guess so," Henry assented.

"Well there!" said Ben triumphantly. He drained his coffee cup, paid the waiter, rose. "Any time you want that job, Henry, come around."

"All right," said Henry.

"Don't forget," Ben adjured him, as they parted at the door.

"Much obliged, Ben," Henry told him. As he turned toward the *Tribune* office, his thoughts were centered on George Nye. He perceived—and he had never thought of this before—that George was a sensitive man. Under this open trumpeting of his domestic tragedy he would suffer, cruelly. And George and Ben were good friends . . . Had been good friends, that is.

Henry felt quite certain that he would never accept Ben's offer to work on the *Standard*.

He told Mary about George Nye's wife that night. Coster had not come home to supper. Business, Mary explained, kept him downtown; and she suggested that Henry eat supper with her. He seized upon the opportunity to give her his news.

Henry had no misgivings in the telling. In so far as he thought upon the matter at all, he took it for granted that Mary had once loved George; he was equally assured that she no longer loved him, having married Harry Coster. So he said to her, in a matter of fact tone: "George Nye's wife has killed herself." And he gave her a copy of the *Standard*, where Ben Harris had given the story all the emphasis he could devise.

When Henry spoke George's name, Mary had looked up with quick attention; when she heard what Henry said, she uttered a low exclamation. When he extended the paper to her, she took it, her eyes on his countenance; and then with an air almost furtive bent her head to read what the *Standard* had printed. She read it all, forgetting her food; and low sounds of pain came from her. Henry, busily eating, perceived that she was distressed; he attributed this feeling to the *Standard*'s methods. Sought to make all plain to her by sentences dropped between mouthfuls, and to which she paid no heed at all. "Ate lunch with Ben Harris, today," he said. "He told me about it. He said he was going to make a big story out of it. He's city editor of the *Standard* now. I expect he wrote a lot of that himself. It's pretty hard on George. I'll bet he feels bad about it. I haven't seen George since papa's funeral. I wonder if he still lives in the same place. I'll bet he's glad she's dead. I'd hate to have a wife that ran away and shot herself. I guess he's sorry he married her. Ben ought not to print it all that way. . . ."

He rambled on, his attention upon his plate, and so failed to perceive the warning signs in Mary's countenance, till she cried out, crushing the paper in her hands: "Will you be still!"

He had not seen Mary angry for years; yet she was patently angry now, though tears rolled down her cheeks. "Will you be still!" she cried.

"Why, what's the matter?" Henry asked, bewildered.

For all answer, Mary put her face down into her hands and wept aloud; her body seemed to collapse upon itself; she allowed her head to rest on the table edge, and her shoul-

ders shook. After a while, Henry said awkwardly: "Your hair is in your hash!"

This intelligence produced no immediate result; but after a little Mary slowly straightened up, and wiped her eyes with her napkin, and then felt her hair solicitously.

"There's none on it," Henry told her.

"I'm so sorry for George," she said, hiccoughing with grief.

"Yes, it's hard on him, all right."

"I wonder where he is."

"I'll go up tomorrow and see if I can find out," Henry suggested.

Mary shook her head, faint panic in her eyes. "No, don't do that! Don't do that!"

"Why—"

She rose hurriedly, retreating. "I can't talk," she said brokenly. He watched her progress toward the door; she backed from him, eyes on guard. "I can't talk!" she cried; and disappeared.

Henry was left very unhappy. He resented his unhappiness, blaming her for it. How was he to know that she would take his news so hardly? He had expected her to be interested, but this uncontrolled misery was out of all reason. He went upstairs presently, and stopped at David Pell's room. David was reading, laid his book aside; and Henry slumped down on the bed, his hands under his head, his feet resting on the footboard to avoid soiling the counterpane. Pell saw that Henry was troubled, and asked a question or two, and Henry told him the story.

"I used to think George was no use," he explained, "when he used to come to the house. He was always doing some foolish thing to make me laugh, and I didn't laugh much. I remember when he and Ben Harris bought a bicycle, though, I thought he was all right. They let me ride it. He was a kind of pathetic-looking fellow. I guess Mary—liked him, all right."

"He and Ben Harris were friends?"

"They used to room together."

Pell said mildly: "It doesn't seem as though Harris ought to spread the story this way, then."

"George was always the kind that things happen to," Henry suggested thoughtfully. "You know! The kind that you don't hate particularly; but if you were a boy you'd throw a snowball at him. Like stepping on a worm. He was so darned helpless looking. . . ."

"Do you ever see him?"

"He came to papa's funeral. His wife had run away then."

After a little silence, Pell asked: "Why don't you go see him, some day? I expect he'd like to see you."

"I think maybe I will," Henry assented. He laughed a little. "It's funny, kind of. Mary having him for a beau, and then marrying Harry Coster. George was so little, and bald and weak looking! and so silly, trying to be funny."

"And Mr. Coster is so sure of himself!" Pell commented. There was no edge to his words; his tone cast no aspersions. But Henry looked at him, and he looked at Henry, and then they spoke of other things. There was a community of feeling between these two; they were developing a definite friendship. Pell was seven years Henry's senior, but the disparity of ages was never particularly apparent. After a while, Henry borrowed a book and went to his own room.

But he could not read. He was troubled that night and for days thereafter by a curious sense of tragedy.

IV

At one angle of Henry's life, he and David Pell had no contact. David had no bicycle, no wish to have one; and since his rupture with Jimmy Horn, Henry had found no new cycling companion. He might have formed an alliance with any one of the hundreds of wheeling clubs, large and small, which were organized all over the city, but Henry was not naturally gregarious; he did not readily transform acquaintances into friendships. So he was apt to ride alone.

He found a very definite pleasure in these solitary venturings. Sometimes he chose the popular routes, sometimes he wandered into by-ways. Mary used to worry about him; used to express her concern. She was afraid a carriage would run into him, afraid he would run into a carriage, afraid of many contingencies she was unable to define. Henry had always laughed at her worries; so when one day, in a fraction of time he perceived that her fears were about to be fulfilled, he had an amused thought that Mary would now be able to say she had told him so. Then oblivion descended upon him.

He had gone that day—a Sunday afternoon in September

—to the Reservoir. David Pell had loaned him a volume of Dumas, which he wrapped in paper and fastened behind the saddle of his machine. At the Reservoir, he had found a bit of turf not occupied by picknickers; and he sprawled there on his stomach, the book between his elbows, his eyes wandering from its pages to the scene about him, for an hour or two. The day was fine and warm; his mood was indolent. After a while he tired of reading, and wrapped the volume in paper again, then turned on his back and covered his eyes with his arm and sought to sleep.

But sleep did not come to him; and at length he decided to start for home. The regular route would at this hour be filled with other cyclists; to avoid them he turned northward toward Brighton. His wheel of late had given him some trouble; the rubber washers which took up the shock between steering post and saddle had become soaked with oil and decomposed, so that the coupling had stiffened. He had spent the morning making repairs and adjustments; and the machine was behaving better now. He struck a lively gait, and a southerly wind at his back helped him along, so that when he started down the grade he picked up speed in spite of himself. After a moment he lost the pedals, his feet unable to follow their swift revolutions.

At the bottom of the hill, it was necessary for him to make a right-hand turn. His machine was out of control, so that the turn would not have been easy in any case; but as he reached the corner, he perceived that it would be impossible. A coal wagon, approaching from the right, occupied half the road.

He tried, too late, to swerve to the left. The bicycle skittered dangerously, slanted across the street like an arrow, and headed for a board fence which bounded a field there. He had time to think of Mary. The noses of the startled horses almost touched his shoulder as he shot past them; then his front wheel struck the granite curbing, ten to twelve inches high.

This must have been, he thought later, about half past four in the afternoon. When his senses haltingly returned and he succeeded in analyzing his surroundings, he found himself on a sofa in a room he had never seen before. Flaring gas lights above him hurt his eyes. He remembered, almost at once, what had happened; but that was in late afternoon and the gas testified that it was now evening. He asked, absurdly enough:

"What time is it?"

Someone said, in a pleasant voice: "He's coming to! He's coming to!"

Henry tried to sit up, then abandoned the attempt. He found that he was in some pain. His head was very sore and it throbbed; his feet hurt agonizingly. In spite of the gas light, he opened his eyes again, and looked around. There were, he found, five people in the room beside himself. A small boy was standing at the head of the couch, looking down at him. A man and a girl were bending attentively over him; and another man, and an older woman, stood in the background.

The man who bent over him said solicitously: "There, feel better now?"

Henry grinned feebly. "I don't feel very good."

The girl exclaimed, in a tone wonderfully soothing: "Just shut your eyes! Shut your eyes and rest."

Henry obeyed readily enough. The man who had spoken before said, in a lowered tone: "Guess he'll come along all right. Skull's not damaged any. Can't be sure for a few days, in a case of concussion. Might be as well not to move him."

The woman answered: "We can keep him right here, Doctor Snow! He can stay right here till he's better. I'll put him in the spare room. Shirley, you come help me make up the bed. The poor young man . . . It's a mercy he wasn't killed. Those terrible bicycles. Shirley, you come help me, now."

The girl's voice. She must be Shirley. "I want to stay here. In case he needs anything, mama. There'll be time to make the bed."

Another man's voice. "That's right, mama. There's no hurry yet. We ought to send some word to his folks, too."

The doctor, hurriedly. "Well, he's as right as I can make him. I'll have to go along."

The woman. "We'll take good care of him, Doctor Snow. I'm a famous nurse, myself. I'll see he has the best. My spare room. We can take off his clothes. There's blood on them. I don't want to get blood on my best sheets. But you don't need to have any worry. . . ."

Henry felt the touch of soft fingers on his hand, caressingly. He ceased to attend the conversation. It must be the girl's hand. Her name was Shirley. He vaguely desired to sleep, and lapsed for a moment into something like a doze.

When his eyes opened again, the girl was still beside him. She saw that his eyes were open and asked: "How do you feel?"

Before Henry could answer, the small boy spoke. "Oh, leave him alone, Sis. How d'you think he feels?"

"I'm pretty good," Henry said weakly. He perceived that the others were gone; was vaguely conscious of a thumping and a stirring above stairs. They must be getting the spare room ready. He sought to arouse himself. "I'll have to go on home," he said.

Shirley shook her head. "Lie still," she commanded. "You're awfully hurt. Your head's all cut, and your feet. . . . We'll take care of you."

"Mary'll worry about me," he insisted. "She always said I'd get hurt some time. I'll have to go home."

"Who's Mary?" she asked swiftly.

"My sister."

"Oh! Where do you live?"

"In town."

"But where? We'll send word. Papa'll drive in."

"I better go home," he persisted.

She smiled at him compellingly. "Now! You sha'n't." She left his side for a moment, crossed to the door and called upstairs: "Papa, he can talk now." Her father appeared in the doorway. Henry, able to see more clearly, perceived that he was a small, heavy-shouldered man with a little stoop to his big head. His mouth was broad and gentle and Henry liked him. This man stopped beside the sofa and said amiably:

"Well, you got quite a bump!"

"Yes, sir," Henry replied.

"Prior's my name," the man announced. "Clem Prior. This is my daughter Shirley, and my son Mat."

"I'm awful sorry to bother you," Henry told them.

"I'm sorry you have to. But things being as they are, I'm glad we were handy by to take care of you. You bounced right into the field beside my house."

"I was going pretty fast. I lost the pedals."

"Shirley saw you coming down the hill," Prior told him. "She yelled at you; but you can't stop a runaway bicycle yelling at it."

Henry looked toward the girl. "I was afraid you'd be killed," she said, and shuddered at the memory. He thought her pretty, with warm eyes and hair, and a friendly voice. Her white dress made her seem so clean. . . .

Prior spoke. "I expect your folks would like to know where you are."

"I guess they would," Henry assented. "But I can go on home."

The other shook his head, smiling. "Ma's fixed up the spare-

room bed. She'll not like it if you don't stay the night. Or longer, if you need. We'll put you to bed, and then I'll drive in and tell them you're here. What's your name?" Henry told him. "Live in town?" Henry gave him the address.

"It's a boarding house," he explained. "My sister runs it. Mary . . . Mrs. Coster. I hate to bother you." He was very tired.

"It ain't any bother, scarcely."

"I could ride, when I've rested a little while."

"You ain't likely to ride that wheel till it's fixed some," Prior commented drily. "It's a little disarranged, here and there."

Mrs. Prior appeared in the doorway, talking as she came. "Now Clem, I'm all ready for him. How'll we get him upstairs? He can't walk, with feet all cut up like his are. Mat, what are you standing there for? Get out of your pa's way. Clem, I'll get Mr. Davis to come in and help you carry him up."

"I guess I can manage, maw," Prior said good humoredly. "Just open doors and things." He bent above Henry, who feebly protested, but who found himself lifted and borne easily across the room. It was Shirley who guided his bandaged feet so that they would not collide with the door frame; and as Prior ascended the stairs, it was Shirley who from below advised and counselled him. Clem deposited him on the bed, and Henry relaxed in utter contentment, smiling wearily. Then opened his eyes in swift alarm. Someone was unbuttoning his shirt. It was, he perceived, Mrs. Prior.

"Just you lay still," she bade. "We'll have you comfortable in a minute, now."

Henry looked wildly around. "Where's Mr. Prior?" he demanded.

"Gone to hitch up." He was clutching wildly at his garments. "Now, sonny, don't hinder me."

"I can undress myself," he protested.

"Gracious sakes, don't you know enough to know you're hurt. Sick maybe. Let me tend to you."

"I can undress myself," Henry insisted more loudly. She drew back from him, laughed a little, said:

"Why, my land, I'm old enough to be your mother." He was speechless. "All right, then. I'll bring you one of Clem's night shirts. If you want any help, just call me. I'll be right outside." She departed reluctantly; returned with the promised garment. "We've already taken your shoes off," she said.

"Maybe you can manage the rest. I'll go fix a nice hot drink to put you to sleep on."

Left alone—he assured himself of this by a cautious scrutiny of his surroundings—Henry managed to work himself out of his garments. He found both his feet bandaged; they felt swollen, and a pulse throbbed in them. Another bandage bound his aching head. On his right side he discovered a raw abrasion and a bruise, which seemed to have gone unremarked. He moved gingerly, had to stop now and then to rest; but he managed it, and the cool night shirt soothed his hot flesh. In bed, he drew the covers about his chin. He had conceived a lively horror of Mrs. Prior. Such a woman might do anything. He wondered vaguely where Shirley had gone; whether she would go to town with her father. Probably Mary would come back with them and cry over him. Cry over him . . . The ceiling seemed to move above him, and his eyes closed.

When Mrs. Prior returned with the hot drink, she found him sleeping heavily, murmuring in his sleep. The solicitous woman assured herself that he was indeed asleep, tucked the covers about him, turned out the light and left him.

"A good night's sleep'll do him the most good," she told Mary, when Prior returned with Henry's sister, smothering her concern, beside him. "You stay the night, too. Clem can sleep on the sofa, and you come right in with me. . . ."

In the morning, feeling almost himself again, Henry rode home with Mary behind Prior's pair. Mrs. Prior could hardly be persuaded to let them go. Shirley had been very quiet, saying little; but she and Henry looked at each other now and then; and when they left, she called softly: "Goodby, Mr. Beeker."

He replied: "Goodby, Miss Prior."

After Clem had deposited them at home, and Mary had thanked him, and he had gone, Henry and Mary climbed the steps together. She pulled the bell. Clem's carriage turned the corner, disappearing.

"They're nice folks, Henry," Mary said.

"Pretty good," he replied.

"Well, they were mighty good to you."

"I guess my wheel isn't worth fixing," he remarked.

"It's a mercy you're not dead. I hope you never do fix it." The door was open; they were in the hallway. "And I should think you'd be more thankful to them that took care of you."

"I told them I was much obliged."

"Well, you don't sound it."

"Oh, Mrs. Prior kept fussing at me, all the time. I don't like her."

"Well, I do," Mary replied. "I liked her a lot. And him, too. And Miss Shirley's a nice girl.

"Well, I did like her," Henry conceded, before he went upstairs.

V

As one result of his accident, Henry for the first time saw his name in the paper. The *Tribune* printed a brief statement of the circumstances, and spoke of him as "one of the younger members of the *Tribune* staff, who began as an office boy." He preserved the clipping for years; it was forever turning up in a book, an old envelope, or between the leaves of a disused notebook. He had at first vague thoughts of starting a scrap book with this clipping; but the project never materialized.

His recovery from his injuries was rapid, but it was some days before he could walk without pain; and his head ached exceedingly. On Wednesday he was able to return to the office and received the comments, sympathetic or jovial, which his fellows there offered him.

He was concerned about his bicycle; but Mary told him that Mr. Prior had promised to keep the wreckage for him to inspect at his leisure. He thought vaguely of hiring another wheel to go out there on Sunday. But his plan was put aside for another. Friday night of the week after his accident, at David Pell's repeated suggestion, he went to see George Nye.

He located George through Ben Harris, who said that George had come to see him after the publication of the story of his wife's suicide. "He went to New York and brought back the remains," Ben explained. "He buried them here; and he asked me not to print anything about the funeral." Ben seemed faintly crestfallen; and Henry thought he was perhaps ashamed of his part in George's tragedy. "I sent some flowers," Harris added. "I kind of thought somebody ought to."

Ben told him George's address; a rooming house in the West End near where Henry's own home had been. "He's the same old George," said Ben Harris. "Still holding down the same old job, saving a little money all the time, and drying up all the time. Some day he'll blow away. . . ."

When Henry saw George he thought this prophecy a just one. He was surprised to find that he was now as tall as George; that they met eye to eye. George, welcoming him with a pitiful cordiality, cried:

"Well now, Henry! I wouldn't hardly have known you. Yes sir, you've grown like a weed, haven't you. Yes sir, you have. Well now, come in and sit down."

The room was small; there was but one chair. Henry sat on this chair, George upon the bed. "I thought I'd come and see you," Henry explained, uncomfortably.

"Well, I surely am glad to see you, Henry. I haven't seen any of you folks for a long time. Not since your father died. No sir. You all well, are you?"

Henry said, eyes averted: "Why yes, Mary's right well." He got the worst over with. "She's married now, and the boarding house is doing good. Yes, she's well." He did not look at George; he was vaguely afraid that the bald little man would cry. But George did not cry. If there was an instant's hesitation in his answering word, Henry did not perceive it.

"Married, is she?" he repeated. "Well now, I'll bet she got a good husband. I'll bet she did."

"His name's Harry Coster," said Henry.

George asked in a friendly way, for details; Henry gave them, forgetting his embarrassment. Then they talked of George's own life. George did not mention his dead wife, nor did Henry; but George confessed that he saw few people. "I'm pretty busy all day in the store," he explained. "On my feet. It leaves me tired!"

"I expect it does."

"So I stay at home a good deal."

"Don't you ride a bicycle any more?" Henry asked; and George looked startled, then laughed heartily, his face a mass of wrinkles.

"No, no. I'd almost forgotten that old wheel. No, that's gone to the junk pile long ago, and I never got another one. No, I'm too old for that sort of thing, any more. I expect you ride a lot."

Henry told of his accident. "Didn't you see it in the paper?" he asked. "Here. . . ." He produced his clipping, and George studied it.

"No, sir, I didn't see that," George replied. "I surely missed that. Why, say, you were mighty lucky, weren't you . . . Not to get hurt worse!"

Henry stayed much longer than he had intended. He found himself liking George, anxious to do something to give the other pleasure; and in the end he conceived the idea of asking George to dinner. When he had issued this invitation, he had a moment's terror at thought of what Mary might say, but with youthful stubbornness stuck to his guns, and added urgency against the other's reluctance. In the end George agreed to come on Sunday, and Henry walked home across the Common certain that Mary would be angry with him. For though Henry ordinarily ate in the general dining room, on Sundays he had his meals with Mary and her husband, so that his invitation would bring George into direct contact with Mary. After his first tremors, he found a faintly mischievous pleasure in the prospect.

The event failed to justify his anticipations. Mary received the news calmly enough, only asked a question or two; and when George came to the house Sunday, she herself admitted him and made him welcome with an impersonal poise Henry could not help admiring. She introduced him to her husband as a very old friend, whom Henry had invited to dine with them. Coster, who had a gift for making himself liked, proved so cordial that he and George were instantly absorbed in each other; and Henry, a little disgruntled, found himself more and more excluded from their conversation. He and Mary listened, while George and Coster talked of business affairs. Coster had of late been interested in the inventive project of a friend who had been inspired by the coming of the electric light to conceive a transformer which would also greatly increase the effective current and thus decrease the cost of lighting. Henry, without paying particular attention, had heard Coster speak of the transformer to Mary; he was disgusted, though not surprised, when Coster brought up the same subject now. George was interested; and after dinner, Harry took him away to consult the inventor.

After the others had gone, Mary said thoughtfully: "Well, it was nice to see George again."

"We didn't get much of a chance to talk to him," Henry sulkily commented.

"Well, men like to talk about business and things," Mary suggested, but Henry resented her implication that he was not a man, and went to seek solace in the company of David Pell.

The incident was to have its fruit. In the course of successive interviews, Harry Coster persuaded George to an ardent faith in the new invention. Persuaded him to such purpose that he was able to announce, a few days later, that George was going to put some money into it. "There's a fortune in it," Harry told them, full of enthusiasm. "It works; there's no doubt of that. And when we start to manufacture, they'll all have to have it. All the big companies. And they'll have to come to us. Yes, sir, there's thousands in it."

The ordinary man had not at that time learned to dream in millions. If Coster's imagination had soared so high, he would have said millions; for his faith in the project was unbounded. Mary had, before this, confessed to Henry that Coster was urging her to invest her own savings.

"I don't feel like I ought to, Henry," she explained. "I don't just feel like letting it out of my hands."

Henry was strongly against the proposal. He had never overcome the dislike which Coster's marriage to his sister had inspired. "Don't you do it," he counselled. "I wouldn't do it if it was me. I wouldn't lend him any money. He's asked me, too"

"But you haven't any to lend," she protested literally. "You never save any."

"Well, if I did have any, I wouldn't give it to him to throw away," he insisted.

"I don't know," she said. "It makes him mad when I won't do what he wants, and I don't like him to be mad at me, Henry."

"Let him get mad," he urged. "What do you care?"

She said a little wistfully: "I don't like quarrelling." And Henry wondered—the thought had not occurred to him before—whether Coster were unkind to her.

"Well, I wouldn't give him my money," he said, with finality.

Mary had been in this reluctant and hesitating state when Henry brought George Nye to dinner; when George became her husband's partisan, his conversion had its effect on her. The opinion of poor George Nye had weight with her beyond its worth; she said as much, to him and to her husband. "You're always so enthusiastic, Harry," she told Coster. "I never know how much to be sure of, with you. But George was always careful and saving. If he thinks it's all right, I expect it is."

Coster laughed, faintly angry. "Well, I don't care why you do it," he retorted. "I should think you could trust my judg-

ment, but if you can't, all right. If you'd rather trust someone else, long as he thinks the same as me, I don't care."

Henry, though he was present, had been silenced before the conversation reached this point; he made no further protest, because he perceived that protest was useless. But he disliked Coster more heartily than ever. Curiously, he did not dislike George Nye. He simply thought that George was being befooled.

The end might have been foreseen. Mary gave Coster all her savings; he resigned from his downtown position to manage the new enterprise; and the boarding house became their only support, until manufacture should begin and the new transformer find a market. Mary still had misgivings; but Coster was confident and unafraid.

Coster himself had no savings to invest; he put in only his abilities and his time.

VI

Before these negotiations were completed, Henry had seen Shirley Prior again. His pretext was the necessity for examining the wreckage of his wheel; he hired another, on which he rode out through Brookline and Brighton to her home. The day was Sunday, two weeks after his accident.

He had not, that other day, received any clear picture of the locality itself. Now he alighted at the foot of the hill down which he had come on his runaway machine, and considered the surroundings. The hill, seen from below, was not so steep as he had thought it; it seemed incredible that so mild a slope could have done such damage. The curb which his front wheel had struck seemed low, scarcely noticeable; he remembered that to his staring eyes, before he hit it, it had seemed a full foot high. The board fence over which he had been flung was scarred where the machine had struck it. He looked over the low fence and saw that he must have fallen against a boulder, cropping through the turf there.

The Prior house was just beside this field. No one appeared on the front veranda—the day, in early October, was chilly

—and he wondered if they were all away from home. But as he entered the front gate, the boy, Mat Prior, came around a corner of the house and said to Henry: "Oh, hello!"

"Hello, son," Henry said maturely. "How are you today?"

"All right!" Mat surveyed him. "What'd you come back for?"

"To take a look at my wheel. See if I can do anything with it."

Mat grinned. "It's all bust," he said. "It's around in the stable. Come on, if you want to see it."

Henry followed him. He had a momentary pang at sight of the twisted and distorted frame of the machine that had been his pride. He bent, moving it gingerly to and fro, examining its many injuries. The front wheel was shattered; the handle bars were twisted at an angle as grotesque as the angle of a broken arm; the frame had suffered too.

"If you hadn't come for it," Mat announced at his elbow, "I was going to take it apart."

Henry smiled. "I guess you can have it," he replied.

"Oh, I don't want you to give it to me."

"That's all right."

"I'd give you a dollar for it, only I haven't any dollar."

Henry turned his back on the wreck. Mat followed him out into the open air. "Say, I'm much obliged," he said uncertainly.

Then the back door of the house opened, and Mrs. Prior called: "Who's that out there with you, Mat?"

"It's that man that got hurt," Mat replied.

"Well for goodness' sake, why don't you bring him in the house. Come right in, Mr. Beeker. Don't stand out there in the cold! Mat, I should think you'd know better. Come right in the back way. Right in through the kitchen. Clem'll be glad to see you. He said you'd come back to get your wheel, but he said it wouldn't be much use to you. He's in the front room. Come right on through. . . ."

She ushered them, still talking, into the room where Henry had discovered himself when he opened his eyes after his injury. Clem Prior was asleep on the couch where Henry had lain; a handkerchief covered his face. Mrs. Prior waked him with an exclamation—"Clem! Here's Mr. Beeker come to see about his bicycle."

Prior got to his feet, his face flushed with slumber, his eyes a little confused; but he recognized Henry, and smiled, and held out his hand. Mat, from the doorway, cried excitedly:

"He gave me his bicycle, papa."

"I'll bet you asked him for it," Prior guessed amiably. "He's been itching to get at it with a monkey wrench," he told Henry.

"I used to work over it a lot," Henry said understandingly. "He can have some fun with it,"

"I know where I can get a front wheel," Mat announced optimistically. "I bet I fix it so it will go."

Mrs. Prior asked: "Are you all right now, Mr. Beeker? Is your head all healed up? And those gashes on your feet? They looked as though they'd hurt awful."

"I guess I'm all right," Henry replied.

"I declare, we all felt so sorry for you that night. You looked terrible, with blood all over your face. It kind of made me sick."

"You were pretty good to me."

"I was always one to take care of folks. Clem'll tell you that."

Her husband whimsically assented. "Cynt's a born sympathizer. She'd sympathize with a murderer because he had the hives."

"Well I remember you made enough fuss over a few hives, Clem," Mrs. Prior countered. Prior put his arm across her shoulders and hugged her, sidewise, against his own side. Her pretended pique did not deceive Henry; and he was faintly embarrassed before this open show of affection.

"I wanted to look and see how it happened I got thrown so far," he said. "That's one thing I came out for."

"Shirley saw the whole thing," Mrs. Prior announced. "She can tell you all about it. Shirley! Where's the girl gone? She was here a minute ago." She retreated into the hall, and called up the stairs: "Shirley!"

Shirley answered. "I'll be right down."

"Mr. Beeker wants you to tell him how he got hurt." She rejoined them. "She'll be down in a minute. I thought she must have heard you coming in. She was sitting on the porch that afternoon; and when she saw you coming down the hill, she yelled at you." She indicated a chair, chose one herself. "Sit down, do."

Henry sat down, his cap in his hands. Mat had disappeared toward his treasure in the stable. Clem Prior was not yet fully awake, and once or twice he yawned openly. Mrs. Prior bore the burden of the conversation without effort. Once her husband left the room for a minute to change slippers for shoes; and while he was gone, Mrs. Prior whispered across to Henry: "Shirley's gone upstairs to change her dress be-

cause you're here. She's been talking about you all the time, Mr. Beeker."

Henry, horribly embarrassed and surprisingly pleased, grinned redly and murmured some protest.

"She has," Mrs. Prior insisted. "She's kept asking if I thought you'd come out again, I told her I knew you would."

Clem returning, she spoke of other things and Henry felt grateful to Prior for his protective presence. Then Shirley appeared. He found her so shockingly pretty that he forgot to stand up till she crossed the room and offered him her hand and said composedly: "How do you do, Mr. Beeker?"

"He wants you should show him where it was he got hurt," her mother explained. "You better put on your coat if you go out, Shirley."

"Yes, mama, I will," Shirley replied. She looked at Henry. "Do you want to?"

He dreaded being alone with her but there was something delicious in this dread. "Yes, I guess so," he replied. In the hall, she got into her coat without help from him. Mrs. Prior warned her. "Wrap up warm. It's blowing cold." Then Henry found himself outside, Shirley beside him. They went down the path to the front gate and walked along the street to the spot where the board fence was scarred.

"Here's the place," she told him.

"Did I go right over the fence?"

She nodded. "You sort of hit on top of it, and then slid over."

"I must have looked funny," he suggested.

"I was frightened," she replied. "I thought you must be dead. I ran right out to you."

"Did you?"

"Yes." She pointed toward her home. "I climbed the fence and ran across the field. I don't know how I ever climbed it, either. I'm not used to climbing fences."

"Oh!"

There seemed no more to be said. "I'm much obliged to you for showing me," he said uncertainly.

"I didn't mind."

"Probably we might as well go back to the house."

She looked down the street. "I want to stop at a friend's house for a minute, to tell her something," she replied. "It's just a little way down here. You can come with me if you want to. You don't have to."

"I suppose I ought to get back to town."

"All right, then."

"I guess there's no hurry, though."

"Well, I don't want to put you out."

So they walked the few blocks together; and he waited ten minutes at the gate—he would not go in with her—while she did her errand. Once he caught a glimpse of faces at a window. Then he and Shirley walked home again. Their conversation was incredibly stiff and formal.

When he took his leave of them, Mrs. Prior invited him to come again. "We're always at home Sundays," she said. "We'd like you to come to Sunday dinner, some time."

Shirley said correctly: "Yes, we'd like to have you."

"Well, maybe I will," Henry promised and departed with a sense of escape. Nevertheless, as he rode homeward there was a curious singing within him. He thought that Shirley was a nice girl. And extraordinarily pretty.

He decided to save enough money to buy another bicycle. The machine would make it easy for him to go out to the Prior home again, if he ever happened to want to do so.

2

That winter in the office passed in routine; the day's work, over and over and over interminably. Henry grew in power, but without perceiving that he grew. He was winning from Pat Dryden an increasing confidence; was developing into a reliable reporter. Not a brilliant young man, but one to be trusted. In February Dryden gave him an increase in salary. Henry, with a new habit of thrift upon him, had already saved up enough money for his bicycle; he planned to buy it in the spring, when the roads were passable. But having saved this long, he became to some extent a savings addict. He liked the knowledge that his money was accumulating. There was behind this feeling on his part no definite purpose. He saved first to get the bicycle; but after that he saved money merely for the pleasure of saving.

He found his life in the office increasingly pleasant. The friendship between him and David Pell had ripened. David was older than he; and Henry had come to perceive a solidity in the other which he much admired. David's books had laid their spell on Henry; he was reading omnivorously, in all his spare time, and now and then, at David's suggestion, he bought a book of his own. The two were accustomed to come to the office together; when their work was done at about the same time, they went home together at night. Henry liked to confide in David; he had no secrets from the older man.

He had other friends in the office, too. In fact, every one in the office liked Henry except Jimmy Horn and Marty Bull. In each case, the dislike was reciprocal. Jimmy, ineffably wise in the ways of the world, sophisticated in the worst sense, handling his work with a shiftless ease that sufficed to hold his job, enjoyed making sport of Henry; and his taunts had a rancor behind them. Marty Bull had always disliked Henry, always bullied him or sought to bully him. The two might have made his life miserable but for his friendly footing with the rest of his fellow-workers.

Bob Proctor, for example, liked Henry and instructed him in many ways. Sometimes they were sent out on a story together; then Bob always took command, as a matter of seniority; and under Bob's direction, Henry saw this man and that, asked the questions he was told to ask, and reported his discoveries to Bob—who whipped them into newspaper form. It would have been easy for Proctor to claim all the credit for work of this kind, but he never did so. Henry more than once heard Proctor praise him, to Dryden. Proctor, an indolent man, given to drinking, was nevertheless just and fair to Henry; and Henry liked him.

Tom Pope was ill that winter; he spent some weeks in a sanitarium, and during his absence, Marty Bull did his work, covering the State House, and political news in general. He made enemies in the process. Among the political reporters on the Hill, there was an offensive and defensive alliance; they had a mutual agreement that on routine news no one of them would beat the others. Marty Bull violated this agreement. Chance put in his way advance information of the finding of the McCall special committee which had been considering Governor Russell's recommendation for the consolidation of administrative boards and commissions; and he kept it to himself, so that the *Tribune* had the first story alone.

Marty triumphed over his colleagues at the State House, but not for long. They cast him out, refused to share news with him thereafter. And—it is almost impossible for one man to cover the whole organization of the state government. The other papers began to beat the *Tribune* on routine news. Dryden spoke of the matter to Marty Bull; spoke again, more insistently. In the end he withdrew Bull from that work and sent Charlie Niblo up on the Hill till Tom Pope came back to duty again.

The incident hurt Marty's prestige in the office. He was a high-salaried man, so that his position was always precarious.

In March, the business office directed the editorial department to cut down expenses, and Dryden let Bull go.

When Tom Pope came back to the office, everyone perceived that his illness had aged him. Henry realized that in the past four or five years Pope had lost a good deal of weight, had seemed to shrink in stature. He perceived that the political reporter was growing old, guessed he must be almost sixty.

During this winter also, under the stimulus of his intercourse with David Pell, Henry's mind became more active; his interests widened. He was now old enough to vote; he acquired personal views on the tariff, and decided that he was a free trader, thus provoking long arguments with David. He became a partisan of the gearless motor for street railways, as against either double or single reduction. Yet deplored the coming of electric power because it meant the disappearance of the horse.

"In a few years, there won't be any more horses," he argued. "If they can drive street cars with electricity, they can drive wagons, and carriages, too . . ."

He and David used to like to spend a Sunday afternoon at the Milldam as he and Sam had used to do. They had their favorites among the familiar figures there; knew the histories of some of the horses. One bay mare that had been brought from the West to draw street cars had developed into a fast trotter; Henry could recognize her as far as he could see her. Once or twice he went to auction sales of broken-down car horses, with a vague thought that he might pick up a prize among the hacks there. Sometimes they stopped at Denny Sullivan's and pretended to themselves that they, too, were horsemen; that their nags were steaming under blankets outside; and they helped themselves to the seafood free lunch, and ordered the cheaper wines. Henry preferred Sparkling Burgundy. A pint cost them a dollar and a half.

Until this winter he had only three or four times attended a theatrical performance; at David's suggestion, he now went several times, and with pleasure. Joe Downing, waterfront reporter on the *Standard*, sometimes joined them. The three rocked with delight when they saw De Wolf Hopper in "Wang"; they were enamored of Modjeska; they argued pro and con the abilities of Mansfield, after seeing him in "Jekyll and Hyde." David had, the preceding winter, seen Barrett and Booth; he rated Mansfield below either of these, but Henry insisted that this must be unjust. Joe Downing prefered Den-

man Thompson in "The Old Homestead" to Mansfield, and Henry thought this an outrage.

Once, at David's urgency, they went to Cambridge to hear the Boston Symphony, in Sanders Theatre. Henry found himself unmoved by the music. He got more pleasure out of a subsequent excursion under Joe's guidance when they penetrated to the harbor front and went aboard a tall ship unloading there. The ship's officers knew Joe, and welcomed them all, and showered hospitality upon them in the cabin to such an extent that when after midnight they started homeward all three of the young men were unsteady on their feet. They hired a herdic and rode through the almost deserted streets singing "Annie Laurie" and "We Won't Go Home Until Morning," with no other audience than a tolerant policeman.

Once Henry almost decided to speculate in gas stock on the Exchange, and was dissuaded with difficulty by David, whose tendencies were all conservative. David held that speculation was not only wasteful but immoral. Henry had begun to perceive that in the life of the city there was a definitely high tone of conduct; that men had ideals and sought to live up to them, and respected ideals in others. They took pride in being above some of the weaknesses of the flesh. Thrift and frugality were the rule; open extravagance was rare. Sent one day to interview a financial power on State Street, he found the man of whose name he had long stood in some awe to be merely a kindly old gentleman in a well worn suit of clothes with a patch—neatly applied, but a patch all the same—on one knee.

One afternoon in March, when he was writing a story on the typewriter, one of the office boys brought Clem Prior to his desk. Henry had been out to Brighton more than once during the winter; he was beginning to feel at home at the Prior house; but to see Prior here was a distinct surprise.

"Just happened to be going by," Prior explained. "I came in to see where you worked."

"Why, that's great," Henry told him. "That's fine." He shook the other's hand, showed him around the office, introduced him to Tom Pope, and later to Pat Dryden. The necessity for finishing his story made him leave Prior with Tom Pope for a few minutes; and from across the room he heard them laughing together like old friends. Dryden joined them, and after Prior was gone, Dryden said to Henry:

"He asked a lot of questions about you, Henry. What kind

of a young man you were. What your prospects were." Dryden's eyes were twinkling. "I'll bet he's got a pretty daughter at home."

Henry laughed, happily uncomfortable. "Yes sir. I go out there a lot."

"Thinking of getting married?" Dryden asked. The question was blunt, but the intention was kindly.

"No sir. We haven't got that far."

"It's a good thing to be married," the editor said. "I was married once. It's pretty nice to have a wife to go home to."

Henry felt uncomfortable, but asked no questions. Dryden put aside his serious mood; laughed. "I gave you a clean bill of health," he said. "I told him you were one of my best young men."

"I'm much obliged to you, Mr. Dryden," Henry replied. He wondered, for days thereafter, whether Prior's visit to the office had been half accident, or all design; and for a week or two he did not go to Brighton again.

VII

The winter had been for Henry a full and happy one. The widening horizon of the world which he and David Pell and Joe Downing explored together interested him; this side of his life was in itself sufficient to fill his days. But there was another side which he shared with neither of his friends. Now and then throughout the winter, he took train for Brighton and walked from the station to the Prior home. Sometimes he went for Sunday dinner, sometimes to spend the evening. Once or twice, when bad weather developed, Mrs. Prior insisted that he stay all night. The voluble woman had taken Henry under her wing; she had an infinite capacity for mothering those about her, and Henry, after his first uncomfortable and suspicious diffidence, accepted her ministrations with a certain pleasure. There had been little tenderness in Henry's life. His own mother had been too busy, was dead these many years; and Mary did not know the trick of being tender. To find himself watched over and cared for now gave Henry a keen, and yet a wistful pleasure. One Sunday in January Mrs.

Prior discovered that he had a cold; a snow storm was beginning. She insisted that he go to bed, and herself rubbed his chest with a salve that smelled strongly of mutton suet, till the skin burned pleasantly under her vigorous friction. In the morning, the cold was undeniably better. Upon another occasion he confessed to a digestive disorder and her treatment was prompt and efficacious. Henry came to be very fond of her.

Henry was also, and from the beginning, on good terms with Clem Prior and with Mat, Shirley's brother. Clem had a dry humor which pleased Henry immensely; contact with the older man developed a witty quality in Henry himself. There were times when they laughed aloud together so boisterously that the house was filled with their mirth. Clem was an ardent horseman; he was interested in the discovery that Henry had been, as it were, cradled among horses.

"Yet I don't know much about them except from watching them," Henry confessed. "I've never driven a horse hardly any, except up at Sam Russell's farm."

So Clem taught him to drive; and when he was sure that Henry was to be trusted, he allowed Henry to take Shirley for a ride, one moonlit evening in January, in the sleigh and behind the bay mare which was almost as dear to him as Mrs. Prior herself. Henry and Shirley, warmly side by side beneath heavy fur rugs, the wind whipping their cheeks so briskly it was almost impossible for them to talk, drove up past the Reservoir and in to Brookline and returned by way of Newton after a six mile circuit. When they started out, Mrs. Prior had called from the doorway:

"Now you wrap up good, Shirley! It's mighty cold tonight, and getting colder. I declare, I don't see what fun there is in sleigh-riding, a night like this."

"I will, mama," Shirley promised. "If I were wrapped up any more, I couldn't walk. And we have the robes besides."

Clem thrust his wife indoors. "They'll be all right, Cynt," he told her cheerfully, and loud enough so that both Henry and Shirley heard. "And they won't know it's cold." He came out to pack them into the sleigh, and made sure that their legs were well wrapped in fur, and that the robes were drawn about their shoulders. "Gloves warm enough?" he asked Henry. Henry laughed reassuringly.

"Yes sir," he replied.

But the gloves did not prove warm enough. It was colder than Henry would have believed; the mare wanted to go; the constant strain upon the reins cut off circulation in his fin-

gers. By and by he was forced to work one hand under the robe to warm it, and Shirley asked:

"Is it cold, Henry?"

His fingers aching so that he could hardly control his voice, he nevertheless replied: "Oh no! Just didn't want it to get cold!"

A moment later he felt her hand fumbling for his; then she exclaimed: "But it's like ice, Henry!" She began to chafe his fingers between the palms of her hands. "We'd better turn around and go home. . . ."

"I don't mind it a bit," Henry insisted. "It's getting nice and warm, now."

"I'm rubbing it," she told him.

"Much obliged," Henry replied. "I guess that's doing it good."

"But your other hand must be just stiff!" Her tone was full of solicitude.

"Well, I'll warm them up one at a time," he suggested.

She chafed his fingers vigorously. "It feels warmer, now."

"It's all right," he agreed.

"You wear one of my mittens," she told him. "They're warmer than gloves. I'll put it on your hand."

"Your hand will get cold."

"Under this robe! Besides, I'll wear your glove."

Then his other hand had to be warmed. With her mittens on each hand, he was more comfortable; and he almost regretted this. By and by she asked if his hands were cold again, and he shook his head and said they were all right; but after a few minutes more he changed his mind. "One of them's a little cold," he confessed and let her rub it to warmth again. . . .

When they got home, the tip of one of Henry's ears, which had escaped from beneath his cap, was frozen. Mrs. Prior got snow and chafed till it ached and burned. The temperature had dropped a little below the zero mark; and this was one of the occasions when she insisted that he spend the night in Brighton.

Late in January, Shirley asked him to come out for a long sleigh ride, with a number of other young folk, in a hay rick on runners. Henry accepted with some misgivings. The others were merely a haze of laughing, friendly faces; he perceived no individuals except one, a girl about Shirley's age with black hair and blue eyes and a wide, warm mouth. Her name was Mary Day, and she was Shirley's most intimate friend; she sat next to Henry on one side, Shirley on the other;

and she teased him about Shirley till he was fairly miserable with delight. At the moments when Mary made him her victim, Shirley was always careful to be talking to the boy on her other side.

They drove to Weston, to a farmhouse where they were welcomed in a great room all warmed by the blaze from an enormous hearth; where they ate apples and doughnuts and cheese and drank cider till it was necessary to turn homeward again. Long before they got home, they were all sleepy, and some were actually asleep. The strain of sitting for a long time in a cramped position had wearied them all; Shirley had come to lean against Henry, and he held himself stiffly upright to support her slight weight, and was very proud.

Sometimes on Sunday afternoons they went coasting. Mat had a bob sled long enough to accommodate half a dozen passengers. Henry thoroughly enjoyed the rushing slides down the long hill, enjoyed the hot tugging as they pulled the heavy sled up to the top again. It was a matter of seconds to come down, of minutes to go up. When they ranged themselves upon the sled for the descent, Shirley in his arms, this physical intimacy gave him, since Shirley was so fine, a curious sense of happy decency. He was moved by many protective impulses, imagined the sled overturning so that he might save her body at expense of his own; thought how he would throw himself between her and the wall, the post, the fence with which they were about to collide. When the sled darted down the hill, the others shouted or screamed with delight as their sex dictated. But Henry made no sound; his lips compressed, he endured in silence the delirious ecstasy of the descent.

Until this winter, Henry had been almost wholly unversed in the higher arts of play. He lent himself soberly to the business of playing now.

VIII

At home, things went not so well. During the winter, Henry began to perceive that Mary was unhappy. Perceived also, a change in Harry Coster. One night, in David's room, Henry

was reading "Oliver Twist." From below stairs Coster's voice came up to them, loud and angry. Henry lifted his head to listen, and saw that David was also listening; and when the voice was silenced, Henry asked:

"What's the matter with him, do you think?"

David shook his head.

"I think he's different, lately, don't you, Dave? He always used to be laughing, and slapping you on the back, and teasing Mary and laughing at her. He don't any more."

"I never knew him as well as you do," Dave suggested.

"Well, you've seen him around. You know the way he's always acted."

"Yes."

Henry cried with repressed anger: "I hate to hear him talk to Mary that way. I told her she was foolish to marry him."

David smiled a little. "Why don't you go down and remind her of that, now?"

Henry grinned, a little ashamed. "Oh, I know, it does no good to talk. But it makes me mad."

"It's too bad."

"George Nye came to dinner last Sunday, you know; and he got mad about that. He didn't say anything before George; but after George was gone, he lit into Mary. He'd found out, somehow, that George used to be crazy about her. But he liked George all right as long as he could get money out of him."

"I expect the trouble with him is that his money-making schemes aren't working out," David suggested.

"I don't know anything about that."

"I happen to know a little. He's up against a hard game. This transformer he's backing is a visionary project, anyway. But even if it were good, it's not easy to market a thing like that to the big companies. They have their own men at work, figuring out schemes along those lines. I expect Coster's finding he set his hopes too high."

"Well, he don't have to take it out on Mary," Henry insisted.

David smiled a little. "That's human nature, Hank. He persuaded her to put her money into it. If the money is lost, he has done her an injury. The surest way to make yourself hate a man is to injure him. That's probably the trouble between him and George Nye, too. George put his money into it, you know. All he'd saved."

"I told them not to," Henry reminded him.

"You certainly knew what was going to happen, didn't you?" David suggested, in good-natured derision.

Henry smiled faintly. "Oh, I know it's not very nice for me to keep talking that way. But I'm worried about Mary, Dave. About the way he treats her. She don't say anything to me; but she's getting thin. You've noticed? And she looks as though she'd been crying, about half the time. Eyes all red."

David nodded.

"I wish I could do something to make him treat her a little better. . . ."

Late in March, the situation came to a minor crisis. It was by that time an open secret that Coster's venture was not proving successful. One night he confided to Henry that if he had a little more money, it would be enough to swing them over the last hump and start them on the road upward. "We've got it all working fine except one thing," he explained. "Just one little thing. That can be fixed too. Yes sir, fixed up inside of a week. All we need is about two hundred dollars. Yes sir, two hundred dollars. Got to get some tools made, and hire a couple of men, and finish it all up. Yes sir." He became confidential. "You wouldn't care to invest about two hundred dollars, would you, Henry?"

Henry shook his head. "I haven't got two hundred dollars."

Coster looked surprised. "A fellow earning the pay you do? And it don't cost you a cent to live. You don't pay any board here. I never asked you to pay a cent of board, did I?"

"It's not your boarding house," Henry retorted.

"Well, it's my wife's," Coster insisted. "It's her establishment. If I'd been like some men, I'd have charged you board and lodging. Yes, sir." He became persuasive, and Henry perceived that the man was a little drunk. "Two hundred dollars'd do it, Henry. Be worth thousands of dollars to you some day. It would."

Henry got rid of him eventually; and Coster went upstairs to his room. Then Mary came from the kitchen, and Henry saw that she was troubled, and asked her what had distressed her. She shook her head. "Nothing, Henry," she replied.

"There's no sense in saying that, Mary. I can see . . ."

"I'm a little distressed about Harry," she confessed. "He counted on this business so . . ."

"He tried to borrow money from me," Henry told her, and laughed. "I told him I hadn't any money."

"That's right, Henry," she agreed. "Don't ever let him

know . . . Harry means all for the best. He means to do right, Henry. But where money is concerned, he doesn't understand . . ." Something like a choked sob checked her utterance. "I declare, sometimes I don't know how I'm to pay for our groceries, Henry."

"Are you still giving him money?"

"He keeps asking me for more, Henry."

Henry uttered an exclamation of anger. "You oughtn't to," he protested.

Mary turned away, wandered about the room; she rearranged a chair here, straightened a picture there, came back at last to face him. "I don't want you to think hardly of me, Henry," she said. "I can't let you do that. I want to tell you . . . I've kept some money for you. You never saved any, and I knew you'd want to get married some day. I used it for a while, but as soon as I could, after I paid Mrs. Bassett, I saved it up again and kept it aside for you. Half of what papa got for the blacksmith shop, Henry. I've got it saved for you. Three hundred and fifty dollars."

Henry, surprised and deeply moved, protested: "Why Mary, you didn't need to do that. You've supported me ever since I was a boy."

"You've always given me money right along, Henry."

"Just a little. I never paid any board . . ."

Then Coster burst in through the door; and his eyes were angry. "You're right, there. Not a damned cent did you ever pay," he cried. "Living on me, here, and wasting your money. . . ."

"I haven't been living on you," Henry exclaimed. "You never gave Mary a cent; never paid her a cent since you married her to save paying board yourself!"

"I'll knock your damned head off!" Coster cried. But Mary flung herself upon him, begging piteously:

"Harry, Harry, don't talk so."

He pushed her away. "You, sneaking around here keeping a lot of money for that brother of yours to live fat on, and me ruined for lack of it. When I might be a rich man. That's the way you treat your husband."

"I've given you every cent I had," she pleaded.

"Don't go lying. I heard what you said to him. Yes, I was listening. Right outside the door all the time. Three hundred and fifty dollars."

"But it belongs to him," she insisted. "It belongs to him. It's his share of what we got when papa sold his blacksmith shop."

"Yah! Blacksmith shop!"

Henry had watched in silence, stunned and paralyzed by the sudden outburst of passion and hate on Coster's part; shaken by the abject appeal in Mary's every word and posture. Though he sometimes patronized her, he had always unconsciously thought of Mary as competent and assured; there was something tragic in discovering her thus abased. She began to cry . . . He had an impulse to do physical violence on Coster; but Coster was half a head taller than he, outweighed him fifty pounds.

But there was a poker in the fireplace and Henry had a practical turn. He lifted this weapon and strode toward Coster and raised it threateningly.

"Stop talking like that," he cried.

Coster whirled on him, saw the poker, and hesitated. "Drop that poker," he commanded.

"I'll kill you if you don't let my sister alone," Henry told him. His own emotions overcame him; he began to weep with rage, tears filled his eyes and his lips trembled. Coster laughed derisively.

"Look at him cry!"

Henry swung the poker blindly, and Coster flung up a hand. The iron struck him on the elbow and he howled with pain and backed away, nursing his agonizing arm. Henry, a little startled to discover what he had done, did not follow his advantage. "You let Mary alone," he commanded.

Mary now interceded on behalf of her husband. "He doesn't mean anything," she protested. The spectacle of her humility overpowered Henry's resolution. He let the poker hang limply at his side; and Coster took heart, became placative.

"You can see I'm reasonable, Henry," he urged. "Here I am on the edge of making thousands of dollars, and going to lose it all for the sake of three or four hundred. . . ."

"You said two hundred!"

"We might get along with that. But we really need more. . . ."

Henry abruptly sickened of such squabbling. "Let him have it, Mary," he directed. "Give it to him."

Her hands flew together, fingers twisted and intertwined. "I've meant it for when you get married, Henry."

"I'm not going to get married. Give it to him."

"It'll be worth thousands to you," Coster cried, jovially sure of himself once more. "We're all going to be rich, Henry."

"If you don't treat Mary right, I'll kill you," Henry told him implacably.

Coster laughed. "Why Henry, I'm crazy about Mary. She knows it, too." He approached his wife, put his arm across her shoulders. "Don't you, Mary?"

Mary looked wistfully up at him. "I know I love you, Harry."

"There, Henry," Coster cried triumphantly. "You see!"

"You treat her decent, that's all," said Henry, sullenly, and left the room.

IX

One Sunday afternoon in May, Henry spent at the Prior home in Brighton. He had gone out by train. This was cheaper than to rent a wheel; and he had already decided not to buy a wheel, but to continue saving money for other possible uses. Mrs. Prior had invited him; and on his way from the station he passed Mary Day's home, where Shirley came to the gate to meet him. She and Mary had been sitting in a hammock on the porch; and Henry went in with Shirley, and they stayed there for a while. He liked Mary Day. She always teased him about Shirley, and this made him uncomfortably happy. When Shirley at last suggested that they go on to her home, however, he welcomed the suggestion. He and Shirley walked slowly; so slowly that at times they seemed not to advance at all. Spring was in full flood all about them; there were flowers in some of the yards, flowers in the open fields which lay between the scattering houses. The air was warm as Shirley's hand. This was one of the days when he and Shirley were vaguely abashed in each other's presence; they talked not much, looked at each other not at all. There were times, on other days, when they laughed together happily, when anything either of them said was a source of mirth to both of them. There were times when they tussled together, warring over a photograph which he had pilfered and which she sought to recover, disputing the possession of a hammock pillow. . . . This was not such a day. So soon as they left Mary Day behind them, Shirley became silent; and Henry, looking sidewise at her, perceiving the soft bloom of her cheek and the faint down upon it where the sun struck across caressingly, had no desire for speech.

When they reached the Prior home, the atmosphere approached more nearly to normal. Mat wished Henry to see how the wreck of Henry's old wheel had been made into something navigable; and they all went around the house to the stable together, and discussed what Mat had done in a critical fashion that delighted the boy. Then Shirley fed wisps of hay to the mare in her stall, while Henry instructed Mat in some fundamentals of mechanics. Henry became interested in this to such an extent that he forgot Shirley; she said at last, in a silky voice: "I think I'll go into the house now."

Henry instantly abandoned Mat. "I can come, can't I?"

"Why, you seemed to be having a better time here."

"I was just showing Mat how to fix that pedal."

"Well, if you want to, then."

In the house Mrs. Prior welcomed Henry as she always did, with an unfailing warmth and hospitality. Clem was having his afternoon nap in the parlor, but she dislodged him with a whispered instruction, and after shaking hands with Henry he disappeared. Shirley sat down on the sofa where her father had been lying, and when Mrs. Prior departed on the pretext of household duties, Henry chose a stiff chair near Shirley. She said gently: "That's an awfully uncomfortable chair. Take the big one." So he took the big one.

He had, abruptly, an impulse to talk about himself. He chose the end of a considerable pause to say: "We've been pretty busy in the office this week." Shirley showed some interest. "You ought to come in there some day," he suggested. "Just to see the way they get out a paper. It's a big room, smells of ink and dust and everything; but everybody's working, and you kind of like it."

"I don't think I should like the smell," she suggested.

"Well, you'd like the men there, anyway," he told her; and he spoke of some of them. He said he wanted to bring David Pell out to see her, some day. "He's about the best friend I've got. The best man friend," he amended. "He lives in the boarding house. He reads a lot of books, and I borrow his books, too. I've bought some of my own. Do you like to read?"

She said she read very little. There were with one or two exceptions no books in the Prior home.

He told her about Pat Dryden, speaking of the editor in tones full of respect, so that she was interested and wished to know more. "Your father knows him," he said.

She nodded. "Papa told mama he went in there one day." She smiled at him. "Mr. Dryden said you were a good reporter."

Henry flushed with pleasure. "I'm going to be, someday," he promised. "When I was just a boy, a fellow named Ben Harris used to come to the house. He worked on the *Tribune* then, but he's the editor of the *Standard* now. I used to think that when I was a reporter like him I'd be pretty good. I'm doing now about the same things he was doing then, too. But he never was really a fine reporter, and I'm going to be. Bob Proctor's the best man on the *Tribune*. He's been there since before I started to work for them. And he says I write pretty good stories, sometimes."

"I know you'll be better than he is, some time," she told him.

"I shouldn't wonder if I was an editor some day," Henry agreed vaguely. He remembered Tom Pope, and told Shirley about the political reporter. She shuddered a little at his description.

"He drinks whiskey?" she exclaimed.

"Well, a lot of them do that," he replied. "But it's not the way you think. They don't get drunk. Only they work so hard, and they're up late a lot, and they have to do something."

"Nobody has to drink whiskey," she insisted. "Papa says it's all right for a man to drink beer, but whiskey will kill him."

"I don't drink whiskey," Henry assured her. "Sometimes I have a glass of beer, or musty, though."

The afternoon went swiftly. It was the first time Henry had ever really talked about himself to Shirley; and he became more and more confidential. Before Mrs. Prior returned to call them to supper, he had told her all his plans and hopes and ambitions; and Shirley said she was sure he would do wonderful things. He told her he was saving money. "I started to save up to buy a bicycle," he explained. "But then I decided to keep the money and just keep on saving."

"People spend too much money," she agreed. "Papa says everybody spends more than they need to."

At the supper table, while Shirley and her mother moved to and fro between dining room and kitchen, Henry and Clem Prior talked maturely together, and Mat ate hurriedly so that he might return to his task in the stable for the short interval before dark. Afterwards Shirley would have helped with the dishes, but her mother forbade this. "You and Henry go out doors," she directed. "It's so nice and warm."

Henry was glad of this suggestion. Shirley put a light shawl about her shoulders, and they went out on the front porch.

Clem Prior accompanied them, stood talking with them till Mrs. Prior appeared in the doorway and said sharply: "Clem, I want you to get some coal for my stove." He disappeared, and did not return.

Henry and Shirley sat on the porch railing for a while, facing each other. Warm dusk was about them; now and then people passed along the street before the house, afoot or on bicycles. When they were afoot, sound of their footsteps preceded the murmur of their voices; awheel, their voices came, became audible, dulled to a murmur and were gone while only the hiss of their tires on the road told the method of their passage. Now and then carriages rolled by; and once a crony of Prior's stopped and hailed the house, and Shirley went in to seek her father. Prior talked with this man at the gate for a while, but when the man drove away, Clem rounded the house and went in through the kitchen door without approaching Henry and Shirley.

There was, by the end of the veranda, one of those weak-willed shrubs which begins as a stout trunk, then at the height of a man's head divides in many branches which droop on all sides to the ground, forming a sort of arbor. Against the trunk of this shrub, a bench was placed. Shirley, becoming restless at the discomfort of their seat upon the railing, suggested that they move to this bench. Shadowed by the new foliage, they were almost in darkness there; Henry, looking at Shirley, could only see the whites of her eyes when they caught the light; see the dark blur of her mouth and the halo of her hair. The bench was not wide; they sat, of necessity, side by side, but Henry feared he might be crowding her, so kept as far apart from her as possible. She asked once if he had enough room and he said: "Yes, yes!" He was surprised to find that his voice trembled. "You must be right on the edge," she suggested.

He moved imperceptibly nearer and her sleeve brushed his shoulder. They talked abstractions, in tremulous low tones. His left arm, nearest Shirley, was cramped and uncomfortable from the effort involved in avoiding contact with her garments; and he tried it in various positions without finding relief. A sweet and cleanly fragance hung about her like a warm cloud; when the little stirring airs of early evening moved through the arbor, he could smell her hair. She plucked at the wood of the bench, watching her fingers with drooping head. Once her hand brushed his, and the effect was shocking, like an electric contact.

By and by he tried resting his arm along the back of the

bench behind her. This was more comfortable; she was leaning a little forward so that he did not touch her; nevertheless she seemed nearer to him than she had been before. Their fragmentary conversation became more impersonal than ever.

A little later, Mrs. Prior came to the front door and, not seeing them, she stepped out upon the porch. Shirley whispered: "Sh!" and laughed softly, near his ear. Beneath the drooping branches of the shrub, they were invisible. Henry, leaning past her to watch Mrs. Prior, found his cheek near hers. Mrs. Prior called:

"Oh Shirley!"

Shirley did not answer at once; for Henry had kissed her on the cheek. She did not answer her mother; she turned her head with a movement full of slow beauty and looked at Henry. He saw her eyes were wide and deep, and her lips a little parted.

With no other contact save that of lips with lips, they kissed each other, and he felt her soft breath exhaled in a faint sigh.

Then she laughed, softly and happily, under her breath, and answered her mother's call.

"Yes, mother!"

Mrs. Prior exclaimed: "Oh, there you are," and came down the steps toward them. Shirley reached behind her and held Henry's hand.

2

It is to be feared that during the following months Henry's work on the *Tribune* suffered. Shirley filled his thoughts, at first sweetly excluding every other consideration, then bringing a host of new problems to be met and solved. So soon as Mrs. Prior was admitted into their secret, that lady began planning how and when they should be married, and where they should live. For a while, these three kept the matter to themselves, but one day Shirley told her father, and Clem put his arm clumsily around her shoulder, and smiled and said he thought Henry was a pretty good boy. Mat received the news indifferently; it seemed to him of no great moment. He asked, in a practical manner, where they would live; and he told Shirley she would have to learn to get up early in the morning. "Because he has to be at the office at seven o'clock sometimes," he reminded her.

"I shall love getting up early to get his breakfast," she replied.

"Well, you never would for papa."

"I will for Henry. I would for papa, too, if he wanted me to. But mama always does . . ." Clem's grocery store demanded his early morning attention; in the winter he was away before dawn.

As spring waxed into summer, Henry found himself enmeshed in a net of plans. It was tentatively decided that he and Shirley should be married in the early fall. This decision was reached after Mary had come out with him to spend one Sunday, and she and Mrs. Prior had talked together all day long, in lowered tones, while he and Shirley sought inconspicuous localities and asked only to be let alone. Neither Henry nor Shirley were active in these preliminary discussions. Henry loved Shirley; he assumed that, this being so, they would get married; he looked forward to this consummation, because after they were married he could be with Shirley as much as he wanted to. He also appreciated the fact that a certain financial responsibility would devolve upon him; but Clem and Mrs. Prior had both agreed that he and Shirley could live very comfortably on his salary; and he had been saving for months, and continued now to save. This he considered his contribution to the situation; he was willing others should make the arrangements. As for Shirley, she was in the first warmth of happy fondness for Henry; marriage was to her eyes a remote but attractive probability. She was just twenty years old, and in the first few weeks of what passed for their engagement—they had no thought of any formal announcement, though Shirley told Mary and Mary Day told everyone else—she matured rapidly.

What first brought the future home to Henry as a concrete thing was Clem's announcement that he had a house for them. Shirley met Henry with this news, her eyes dancing, when he went out one evening after his day's work. Clem owned two or three small houses into which he had put surplus profits from his store; their modest rentals were an adequate return on his investment. One of these houses happened, about the first of July, to become vacant; he told Shirley, after consultation with Mrs. Prior, that if she and Henry wanted to rent it, he would put fresh papers on the wall, make other repairs, install a bathroom and reduce the rent to a figure well within Henry's means. Shirley hugged him with rapturous gratitude, and told Henry the news as though she half expected him to hug her father too. He hugged Shirley, but not her father; and afterwards he and Shirley walked down to see the house itself. It was already familiar to Shirley; she told Henry it was wonderful. They were unable to go in-

side; but he saw the exterior through Shirley's eyes, and swelled a little, pridefully to think this would some day be his home.

He had a talk with Mr. Prior about the house and the repairs that were to be made, and the rental. Leaving Shirley at home, he and Clem walked down Sunday afternoon and inspected the premises, and Henry felt as old as Prior himself, and seemed to Clem as young as his son Mat. He gave grave opinions on matters about which he knew nothing, and Prior listened as gravely. They discussed finances. "Of course," Prior confessed, "I'd charge somebody else a little more, probably; but I'm making a fair profit on the investment, out of you, Henry. You don't need to feel beholden."

Henry's knowledge of the real estate market was not sufficient to let him appreciate the extent of the other's generosity; but he said in a dignified way: "I want to pay a reasonable rent, Mr. Prior."

"I'm satisfied if you are," Clem assured him.

The question of accessibility entered into the discussion. Henry often found it necessary to go to the office early; there were occasions when he was unable to start home till late. They discussed the suburban trains and the developing electric transporation, and decided there would be no serious difficulty. Without any definite pronouncement on his part, Henry thus found the thing decided.

During the summer, the house was refinished under Clem's direction, then gradually acquired furnishings under the hand of Mrs. Prior. She had a bed room set in the attic which she gave them. She furnished the kitchen, and bought china, and linen. Mary—by what sacrifices Henry could not guess at the time—gave them their dining room furniture. A portion of Henry's own savings went into the purchase of a table and chairs for the sitting room. By the end of August, the house was already habitable.

Henry took no vacation that summer. At Shirley's suggestion he decided to wait until they were married. "Then we'll have each other all to ourselves, while we're getting settled in our little home," she explained; and they contemplated the prospect rapturously. Henry's preoccuation with all these arrangements was so great that at times he scarce remembered to go to the office at all; nevertheless the summer dragged along and September came.

Mrs. Prior asked him, one day, who would be his best man. Thus Henry was brought for the first time face to face with the problems involved in the final formalities of marriage.

They would be married in the church Shirley had always attended, but quietly, with only Shirley's family and his own and a few close friends to bear them company. Mrs. Prior's question found Henry completely unprepared; she suggested that it was customary for the bridegroom to ask his closest friend to be best man, and Henry said: "That's David Pell."

"Then you must ask him," she suggested. "Doesn't he live across the hall from you?"

"Yes."

"Why don't you bring him out to dinner Sunday? We like to meet your friends, Henry."

Henry promised to do so; and David, after some persuasion, agreed to come. David and Clem Prior found each other congenial; the meal passed merrily. In the afternoon, Mary Day happened to come up to see Shirley, and the four young people spent an hour together. When Mary went home, David walked to her gate with her.

On the way home that evening, Henry explained to David his need for a best man. David said: "Why, I appreciate that, Henry. I'd be glad to do it. But why don't you get Sam Russell? You haven't seen him for a long time; and he's your oldest friend."

Henry replied honestly: "I never thought of Sam. Think he'd come?"

"I expect he'd like to."

"I'll write to him tonight," Henry decided. Afterward, alone in his room with pen in his hand and paper before him, he regretted the decision. He had not seen Sam for years. They were boys then, and the reticences of boyhood held his hand when he sought to renew their friendship now. To confess that he was about to be married seemed to him somehow shameful. He was afraid Sam would laugh at him. . . . Nevertheless, he wrote:

DEAR SAM:

Well, you haven't heard from me for a long time. I've been expecting you'd come in to the *Tribune* office some day and say hello to me. Don't you ever come to Boston? Do you stay on the farm all the time? I expect you've got hay seed in your ears. Don't you even come to town on the Fourth of July to see the fireworks, like the other farmers?

Well, Sam, why I'm writing is this. I have decided to get married. You'll probably think this is funny, but it seems like a wise thing to do. A man needs a home to go

to. A boarding house you get tired of. I have decided to marry a young Brighton lady named Miss Shirley Prior. Her father is Mr. Clement Prior, the well-known grocer.

Well, Sam, I've got to have a best man, and you're the oldest friend I've got. So if convenient will you be my best man? You can come and stay here and go out with me.

He added the date, and a few other details. Sam's reply, when it came a few days later, first astonished and then embarrassed him. Sam replied:

DEAR HENRY:

It's about time you did get married. I thought you must have got married long ago. My wife says you ought to be ashamed of yourself, not getting married before. I've been married over a year. We're going to have a baby in about two weeks, so I can't come and be your best man because I've got to stay here and be his best man when he comes.

But Daisy and me will be thinking about you. Daisy says she wants you and Shirley should come out and see us some time. I said right after you were married, but she says you'll want to be alone for a while. Besides, with a new baby, we'll be all upset, probably.

I've got forty-four acres of good farm land, and a good house, and doing well some years. We don't have to go to town to see fire works. We have our own. If you don't believe it, wait till you're married yourself.

But it's fine, just the same, Henry. Daisy says to tell you so. I like it pretty good, too. I'd like to see you. Have you growed any?

Your Old Friend,

SAM.

Henry showed this letter to David, who laughed over it. "Well, that seems to put it up to me, Hank," he said, handing it back. "All right, I'll go through with you. Don't worry about anything. I'll take care of the ring, and the minister, and you . . . All you've got to do is to obey orders."

"What ring?" Henry asked.

"Lord," David laughed. "You do need a best man."

During the last few days before the wedding, Henry moved in a daze. So many things were happening. In the office, Pat Dryden wished him good luck, and promised him a raise in

pay and a twenty-five dollar bonus. The other men in the office collected money and bought an ornate clock to stand on the mantel in the new house. David Pell gave Shirley a pin set with baroque pearls. "I'm not going to waste money buying anything for you, Hank," he told Henry jocosely. Mr. Prior sent a delivery wagon from his store and filled the kitchen and the pantries with assorted groceries of every kind under the sun. Mrs. Prior went into a last frantic flutter of preparations. Even Shirley withdrew herself from Henry's view; he saw nothing of her for some days before the appointed one.

After so many preparations, the wedding itself was soon over. Henry's impressions of the occasion were few and vague. He remembered seeing David Pell kiss Shirley on the cheek; remembered that Mrs. Prior and Mary were crying together; remembered young Mat dancing in the road and screaming after them as he and Shirley rode away from the church in Mr. Prior's carriage with Clem himself driving. Then Clem stopped before the door of their home; and he and Shirley got out and passed through the gate and up the walk, and faces appeared in neighboring windows, and two or three people, passing, stopped to watch.

Under all these eyes, Henry unlocked and opened his own front door, and he and Shirley went in, and closed the door behind them and were at last alone.

PART III

THE HUSBAND

I

Marriage is, in the strictest fashion, a commencement rather than an ending; it may fairly be taken as marking the beginning of the sober business of life. Most men feel, at one time or another, the longing to be remembered; most men would if they could build for themselves some immortality. There are doubtful ways to this accomplishment, full of long labor, with uncertainty always waiting at the end; but the man who marries, and begets children, has—for better or worse—achieved his universal goal. He has made himself a part of the channel through which flows the stream of life; has given his own thrust, the impulse never to be lost while the world endures thereafter, to the current of humanity.

Henry had, during this first winter of his life with Shirley, some glimmering understanding of his own new importance in the scheme of things; he was no longer an individual, was become a brick in the wall, at the same time more closely one with the world, and more withdrawn from it. He saw, for example, somewhat less of David Pell, and of the other men at the office. When his day's task was done, he liked to hurry home where Shirley waited; to be, aimlessly and with no particular purpose in view, with her. They sat the long evenings together, reading with the lamp between them, talking for a while, tossing back and forth the threads of thought and hope and many plannings which in the end bind together man and wife as close as steel. They made day by day many new discoveries; they found new wonders, each in the other's heart; they discovered the humanity that bound them, the essential fact that for all the warm beauty which each for the other wore, they were in the end but flesh and blood, subject to the flaws of their estate. An object which when seen remotely is all beauty becomes at closer view pitted and seamed, its small inequalities and insufficiencies but too apparent. There is a glamour in distance. A remote hillside sheathed in forest and all veiled in blue has a loveliness without flaw. At closer range you will discover lightning-blasted trees, wind-falls where the fire has run, jutting crags and many dark deformities. You

must in the end come closer still, learn to know each footpath and each ledge, each tree for itself alone, before you perceive the truer beauty that lies under all.

It is so with marriage; and it was, inevitably, so with these two. This first winter of theirs was still and sweet and calm; it had its hours of brighter ardor when the whole world shone. But there were dark hours, too; petty irritations, smothered grievances, words meant to wound. Shirley—and this was a vast surprise to Henry—was a curiously efficient and accomplished person; she had about her an orderliness, an iron insistence on small punctualities which he found almost incredible. She kept her house in order with a zeal which vaguely fretted him; he found in it something like a reproach directed at himself; and he was jealous of the time of hers which the house thus stole from him. He had known her to be lovely and warm and kind; had asked for nothing more. But marriage matured her overnight; and he found that she was wise, that she had a gift for little plannings and devisings, that she could look ahead with a providence impatient of the current folly, that she was thrifty too. . . . And quite immovable. Not even he could move her. Thus one day he proposed that during his vacation in the approaching summer they should go to Chicago, to the World's Fair. She would not agree; they should not, she pointed out, spend the money the trip would require.

He sought to argue with her, urged that such an occasion was not likely to come again, that they should seize upon it now. They had something very like a quarrel upon this point; and the air was dark for days, and Henry hurt and all bewildered too.

Shirley on her part found Henry irritating in so many ways. He was used to living in a room alone; and when in the past he left his things about. Mary had always picked them up again, folded them away. Thus, no matter how disorderly his room in the morning, it was always neat again at night; there had been upon him no obligation at all.

Within the fortnight after their marriage, Shirley was about his ears in the matter, directing and insisting so persistently. She said that when he went to bed at night he should hang his coat upon a chair back, fold his trousers and lay them neatly by. And he was at first amused and delighted at this housewifely turn of hers and kissed her for it. But the next night he left them as he was used to do; and she admonished him, and he was not quite so much amused. And the next night he forgot again, and Shirley, brushing her hair before

the mirror, a towel about her shoulders to protect her night-gown, called to him:

"Henry dear!"

He understood, and remedied his oversight with a certain guilty haste. But a day or two laer he forgot again, and Shirley was a little tired that night, and said ruefully:

"Henry, I should think you would remember!"

"I was going to," he told her mendaciously. "You might give me time."

She shook her head. "No you weren't, Henry," she told him. "You were talking; you'd clean forgotten."

He colored to the ears—and over this minor point as to whether he would have remembered if she had given him time, they had harsh words that left their wounds.

He was apt to be slow in all he did; his thoughts were active, and he talked to her of his days past and to come; but while he talked, his attention wandered from the thing in hand. She had to be patient with his delays. Abed herself, waiting while he slowly prepared to join her, she would listen inattentively to what he said; would check him at last with some admonition as to the lamp, the window, the front door . . . When they came to their room for the night she had time to strip the bed and fold and put away the coverlet, turn down the sheets, thump the pillows up, pin back the curtains, remove her own garments, brush her long hair till it shone, put away in the appropriate drawer or closet the socks she had mended and the garments that day laundered; and even then she would be in bed minutes before he was ready to join her there.

He used to protest, defensively, that he had so many things to talk about. There were rising in him, during this winter, old ambitions half forgotten in the business of loving Shirley. "I think sometimes I'll leave the *Tribune*," he said one night. "Ben Harris offered me a job, said he'd like to have me any time. He used to come to the house when I was a boy. Before father died. I want to take you down there some day, Shirley, to see that house. I was past there the other day, and it's just the same. Only there's a colored man runs the blacksmith shop now, and more Negroes live around. Of course we moved away a good many years ago. You could sit in our window and look right up the back side of Beacon Hill, and I used to watch the horses coming down. A horse is a funny looking thing when you look down on top of him. He's sharp in front and blunt behind. And the tops of umbrellas on a rainy day. Ben came down there with George Nye . . ."

He spoke slowly, thoughtfully removing his clothes, sometimes stopping altogether while he talked to her.

"George is getting to be as bald as an egg," he continued. "He's got a funny shaped head. Runs up like a bluff, and back, and it shines. He used to be always cracking jokes, giggling at them. I never thought he was so very funny. He wanted to marry Mary, but she wouldn't because she was taking care of father and me."

He paused, dreaming there a moment. "I expect Mary misses me," he conjectured. "Harry's away a lot at night and all. I don't like him. He . . ."

"It's after ten o'clock Henry," she interrupted sleepily. "Do come along to bed, dear."

He would manage it at last, but even in bed he kept on talking till he heard her breathing evenly by his side and knew that she had drifted into sleep like a child's. And he had then, alone there in their darkened room, great moments of tenderness, warm and overpowering; and while she slept he would grope and find her hand and hold it, and even in sleep her fingers tightened on his own.

There was stirring in him, during the months of this winter, the sense of his own manhood; the feeling that something was expected of him. He went groping for an outlet, looking for some channel through which to make manifest his new estate. Shirley remarked, one morning, that he had left his upper lip unshaven, and he flushed in red confusion.

"Thought I'd raise a mustache," he confessed.

Shirley giggled. "You'll look awful funny, Henry."

"Why will I?" he demanded defensively. "Harry Coster wears one. A lot of the other men in the office wear them." He added, in a tone of confession: "I look so darned young. When I go to see a man, he doesn't realize how old I am. If I grow a mustache, it'll make me look older."

"I don't think I'm going to like it," Shirley declared. "It doesn't seem clean."

"You're always one to keep things clean," he chided, laughingly. "But I'll wash my face just the same, Shirley."

The mustache assumed, in the course of a fortnight, some substance; it was to Henry's eyes not unsatisfactory. But there were lapses in it, which attracted unkind comment from Jimmy Horn in the office; and in the end Henry shaved it off again. But he let his hair grow down before his ears, and tried to assure himself that this had the effect he desired, that he looked thus more mature.

More than once he talked to Shirley of the things he meant

to do; and at such times she listened with a wise sympathy, full of understanding. She was in years his junior, in fact much more mature than he; but she never let him understand that this was so. On New Year's Day that year—they went to her father's house for dinner, and came early home—they talked for long. He had asked her:

"Do you make New Years resolutions, Shirley?"

She shook her head. "I don't think so, Henry. I make resolutions, but I just do it when I happen to."

"I've gone along till now the same way," he confessed. "Just taking things as they came. But I'm married now, and settled down, and we've got to begin to plan our lives, don't you think?"

She said, with apparent irrelevance: "You're—an awfully lovable boy as you are, Henry. You satisfy me."

"I know," he agreed gravely. "We're going to be happy anyway. But I want to do a lot of things, Shirley. I think about them a good deal." He hesitated, and then laughed deprecatingly. "You know, I've always thought Ben Harris was a mighty brilliant man. When he first came to the house I thought so. He's ahead of his times, Shirley. He has ideas about running a newspaper. Sometimes I think he's wrong; but he's mighty successful, take it all in all."

"You must bring him to supper some night, dear."

"He got me my first job," Henry told her. "When I started in as an office boy." He laughed again, thrillingly. "I remember Mr. Dryden turned me over to Jimmy Horn; and I thought Jimmy was quite a person. He seemed to know so much, to be so sure of himself. I made up my mind I'd be like him some day. But I don't think so much of Jimmy now. He won't go any further than he has gone; he doesn't read, doesn't think much. Just does what he's told. And then I decided I'd be a reporter like Bob Proctor. He's a darned good man, too. Better than I am. Of course, Mr. Dryden gives him more important work to do. I could do it, if I had a chance, I guess."

She listened, eyes faintly smiling, loving him so; and he laid his heart bare before her.

"Did I ever tell you about old Peter Hendricks?" he asked. She took her head. "He died six or seven years ago," he explained. "But he was a fine old man. Been a newspaper man all his life, and worked in New York and everything. He used to run the reference department when I went to work on the *Tribune*; and I got to helping him. He told me the thing to do was learn to write; he said it was the men who could write that went furthest in the newspaper business."

He laughed thoughtfully. "I remember he told me I ought to keep a diary, and I started in to do it, but I don't suppose I wrote in it more than three or four times. Probably Mary's got it put away somewhere. I was only seventeen then. Sixteen or seventeen. But he was right, Shirley. About writing. I'm going to write a book, some time, Shirley. Like 'The Three Musketeers,' maybe. Did you ever read it?"

She shook her head.

"David Pell's got it. I'll borrow it for you. Dave's a fine fellow, Shirley. He's different from the other men in the office, in a lot of ways. Quieter."

"I like him," she agreed. David had come more than once to see them; was welcome there. "I want you to know him always, Henry." She spoke with a definiteness which he found vaguely surprising. "He's good for you."

"I guess he is," he agreed. "He reads a lot. And I want to read. We've got to get some books, Shirley. Have them in the house."

"Yes," she assented.

His eyes clouded. "I had a notion to write a book, two years ago," he told her. "I was reading Shakespeare. Or I guess Dave was reading aloud to me. And he came to a line: 'I Speak of Africa, and golden joys.' And it just struck me, Shirley. Doesn't it hit you? There's so much romance in it, and adventure, and glamour and everything. I was going to call the book 'I Speak of Africa'; but it would have to have a lot of things in it about Africa, and I've never been there. We'll go there some day, won't we? When we've saved a lot of money."

"I expect so," she agreed.

"You know," he told her. "We can do anything we want to. I think that's the thing most people forget, that they can do anything they want to, if they just try hard enough. That's what I'm going to do; pick out the thing I want to do, and keep at it till I do it. You can't stop a man that goes at it that way, Shirley."

"That just means sticking to your job, doesn't it?" she suggested.

"That's all," he agreed. "And you can bet I'm going to stick to mine, and make a big success. I'll bet I'll be one of the biggest editors in New England some day, Shirley. And I'm going to write a book besides. Probably I'll call it 'I Speak of Africa' too. But I don't want it to be just a romance, you know. Not just a love story. But something people will remember."

When they went to bed that night, they lay silent for a

while; and he said at last, softly: "I can feel it in me that I'm going to be a big man some day, Shirley. Do so many things . . ."

But she did not answer, and he knew she was asleep; and he was abruptly, faintly lonely; groped for and found her hand.

Thus the winter sped with them. Usually they went to Clem Prior's for Sunday dinner; sometimes went instead to Mary's boarding house and spent the day with her. Harry Coster was seldom there; he had, Mary told them, many business affairs that engaged his time. Coming home one night Shirley confessed to Henry that she did not like Harry.

"I don't think he treats Mary right," she said.

"I know," he agreed gloomily. "I kind of liked him at first; but not any more." He added: "I'll bet he never gives her back her money."

"She's awfully proud of you, isn't she?" Shirley hazarded; and he nodded.

"She used to want me to be a singer," he said, in quick remembrance, and laughed to himself. "She made me take lessons, when I was a boy. But when my voice changed, I couldn't sing at all. Mary's always wanted me to do something big."

And he added: "I'm going to, too."

Shirley held his hand.

They walked from the station to the house; and there was a moon, silvering the snow, and the night was very still and keenly cold. Henry felt something within him stir in response to this beauty all about; laid his hand on hers where it was linked within his arm. "It's a great night, isn't it?" he said softly; and she nodded by his side.

Sometime in March they discovered, with an awed and fearful happiness, that they were to have a child.

2

During the months of spring, Shirley was very miserable; and Henry was at once bewildered and distressed, full of compassion, full too of a curious resentment not easily defined. Because he was worried about her, his nerves were frayed; because his nerves were ragged, small matters irritated him. Even toward Shirley herself he was at times curt and angry; her weaknesses, the fact that she sometimes lay late abed, the fact that for a while she ceased to walk with him to the station, all roused in him a sullen and resentful mood, which

made them both unhappy. But they had their moments when they clung together, looking into the future with eyes wide and lips faintly tremulous, telling each other that they must not be afraid. And as the weeks passed, Shirley's discomfort somewhat lessened, and Henry learned self-control, and the clouds which had shadowed their lives began to drift away.

Pat Dryden had promised Henry an increase in salary, and he was as good as his word. Henry, now that he had definite responsibilities, was become more frugal, yet without being parsimonious; and Shirley was wise in financial ways. Their groceries they bought at cost from Shirley's father; their rent they paid him punctually. It seemed to Henry and to Shirley too that they had everything they could desire.

David Pell came more and more often to the house that spring. He liked Shirley, and she liked him; but there was also a certain method in her liking. She arranged one Sunday that they should borrow her father's carriage and go for a picnic some miles away, on the Charles. David would go, and Shirley invited Mary Day to be of the party. The two girls had been and were still the closest friends. Mary Day had that combination of blue eyes and dark hair which is so apt to be an attribute of almost startling beauty; she had an ebullient gaiety, and at the same time a way of whispering to Shirley and laughing at her own word which always made Henry uncomfortable. When Henry knew Mary was going on this picnic, he protested faintly.

"She'll bother Dave," he suggested. "He's a pretty sober sort of fellow. And she's always giggling."

Shirley smiled. "I think they'll get along wonderfully," she explained. "Men always like Mary; and he's so fine. I want her to know him." She added: "Besides, you and David will talk about the paper or something, and I want someone to talk to."

She assumed full direction; and when on Sunday morning they started out, she and Henry sat in the front seat, David and Mary behind. Beneath the seats were full hampers stowed. Henry paid no great heed to the direction of their expedition; he was driving, but Shirley told him which way to turn. They left by and by the main travelled road and took a byway and followed this till it crossed a wooded knoll that projected into the marsh toward the river side; and Shirley bade Henry unhitch the horses and secure them here, while she and Mary went on to the picnic ground. When the horses were provided for, David and Henry took the baskets and went along the knoll toward the river. At the end of the high

ground the trees broke away in low shrubbery; the river curved in through the green marsh and touched the shore at their feet. Shirley and Mary had cleared away, from the patch of open sward, the litter of paper and fruit peelings which evidenced that other picnickers had used this spot; here they now made themselves at home. And abruptly Henry recognized the place, and he shrank with a curious sense of horror; looked all around to make his memory more sure. There were even irises in bloom, down by the water; what might have been the same blackbird called gratingly in the marsh below them, before stealing to its hidden nest behind a bunch of cat tails. And Henry, in something like panic, cried out:

"Shirley, I don't like this place. Let's go somewhere else, can't we?"

She protested. "Why Henry, it's one of the best places on the river. We're mighty lucky not to find someone here."

"I don't think much of it," he insisted; and she saw his hot cheeks and asked softly:

"Why, Henry dear?"

"The sun'll come in here in the afternoon," he said desperately.

But in spite of his protestations they stayed, and he was acutely uncomfortable. It was as though Jimmy Horn leered at them from the oak scrub up the knoll; as though there were the sound of an inane and foolish giggle in the very air . . . That night, when they were alone, Shirley said dreamily: "I think David and Mary liked each other, don't you, Henry?" And in a burst of unhappiness he told her about that other picnic by the river years before; and she heard him through, smiling understandingly.

"I felt like an awful fool," he said at the end. She made no spoken comment, but her fingers touched his hair, entwining there; and she bent and laid her cheek on his.

He saw Jimmy Horn next day with a curious feeling of resentment, springing from the memory of ancient wrongs.

And he saw, that same day, another man whom he more and more disliked. Marty Bull, although Dryden had discharged him, was still in town, working for Ben Harris. Henry met Bull on the street; and Bull stopped at sight of him, and crowed aloud.

"Hello there, Hank," he exclaimed. Grinned a little. "Say, you're getting fat. Guess marriage agrees with you, huh!"

Henry nodded. "Hello, Marty," he assented uncomfortably.

"Where you living?" Marty asked; and Henry told him; and

Bull said forwardly: "Why don't you ask a man out to the house some time?"

"Well, I will some time," Henry agreed; and the other chuckled.

"Yes, sir, marriage sure has agreed with you," he declared.

There was in his tone something intangible which made Henry miserable; he asked: "Where are you now, Marty?"

"With Ben Harris," Bull replied. "He was asking about you the other day."

"He wanted me to come work for him, once," Henry assented. "But I thought I'd stick to the *Tribune*."

"You may be working for him before you know it," Bull predicted, and winked; and Henry asked quickly:

"What do you mean?"

But Bull made no further explanation. Winked again and turned away. "Kind regards to Mrs. Beeker," he said over his shoulder; and Henry was glad when he was gone. But the man's prediction stuck in his mind, made him wonder for a while.

He forgot it in the end. There were at home too many matters to engross his thoughts. There was always Shirley. Mrs. Prior came to the house daily, to be with her daughter for a part of the time that Henry was away, to do small chores beyond Shirley's strength. And Mary spent now and then a night with them. It seemed to Henry at times that Mary was beginning to grow old. He spoke of this, once, to Shirley. "Of course, she is thirty-six," he conceded. "But she looks older even than that. There was a time, after my father died, when she looked right young for a while; when she first started running the boarding house. Her eyes look old now."

"She's awfully jolly when she's with me," Shirley protested.

"I expect she tries to keep you cheerful," Henry agreed, in a matter of fact fashion. "She'd do anything for you. But I guess she's unhappy about Harry. I don't think he's at home much, any more. I stop in there whenever I'm in the South End, but I haven't seen him for a long time."

"I asked David," Shirley agreed, "and he told me Mr. Coster is away a great deal. I guess David thinks Mr. Coster isn't much good."

"Coster's crazy about this transformer thing," Henry explained. "I expect he's working pretty hard on that." Voicing hope, rather than belief, she knew. "I hope it amounts to something. Mary's lent him all the money she had, for it, I know."

"She's so nice to me," Shirley told him dreamily. "As if I

were doing the most wonderful thing. And she sits and looks at me with tears in her eyes. Behind those glasses of hers. . . ."

"She ought to have had a lot of children," Henry thoughtfully commented. "I expect she wishes she had."

As the summer began, and hot weather overwhelmed them, he considered sending Shirley to Sam Russell's farm for a week or two; but Shirley would not go. "I'm happier in our own home," she insisted. "I don't want to go anywhere, Henry. But I expect you need a vacation, if you want to go."

"Guess I wouldn't have much of a vacation without you," he protested.

"You and Sam could talk over old times," she urged. "You're such old friends; you ought to see more of each other."

"He's the oldest friend I've got," Henry agreed. "I'll tell you, though, we'll wait and go out there after the baby comes, some time, so you can get to know him too."

So this project was forgotten and they stayed at home; but he devised small excursions to amuse her. He suggested that they go into town on the Fourth to see the Parade of Horribles; but this evoked from Mrs. Prior, when she heard of it, such a shocked and positive negative that Henry was faintly bewildered.

"In her condition?" Mrs. Prior exclaimed; and Henry felt, uncertainly, that he had stumbled into grievous error.

"It's always pretty funny," he urged. "A lot of clowns, and minstrels, and horses dressed up like men and everything."

"That's just like a man," Mrs. Prior commented, in a superior tone; and later he saw her laughing with Shirley, and guessed they were laughing at him. He dared ask no questions of them; but he did ask Mary. She told him that Mrs. Prior was right.

"Women understand about such things," she explained.

He went, himself, to see the parade; it had always a quality which caught his fancy. Something in him relished the grotesqueries of the day. But when he came home and tried to describe it to Shirley, tried to tell her about the gigantic Negro woman with a razor, the walk-pot of beans, the man on stilts, she would not listen to him. "It isn't good for the baby, Henry," she told him gently. And he was hushed into a rebellious and bewildered silence.

More and more during this summer he felt himself excluded from the sisterhood of women. More than once he came home to find Shirley and her mother and other older women to-

gether, talking busily about matters of such a nature that upon his appearance they fell silent all. There was a great deal of sewing going forward; the garments they made were so ridiculously small that he felt, when he held them in his hands, a curious stifling pity and awe. In this time Mary Day, curiously, was a support to him. When he found her at the house with Shirley she would come dancing toward him, set herself at his side, jest with him in that fashion she had; there was between them, he perceived, the bond which unites outcasts. They were outside the circle which ringed Shirley round.

Mat Prior was outside the circle, too; and even Clem. Henry and Shirley's father were thrown more and more together; they sat sometimes on Sunday for long hours, smoking side by side while Shirley and her mother were indoors together. Shirley now seldom went abroad, unless it were to take a walk with Henry in the evening, along the shaded streets; in the afternoon she avoided even the front veranda, and when people came to the house, though the women might go in, the men usually stayed outside with Henry and with Clem.

Henry found pleasure in his associations with Clem Prior. Clem was a mild, kind man; a round little man with soft gray hair thin across his pink scalp. His lips were straight and pink as a baby's; and he smoked a pipe in a fashion curiously precise, not jauntily on one side, but straight forward beneath his nose and drooping with a vague humility, the smoke wreathing about his face. Henry sometimes thought him like one of the mild, mellow cheeses in his store; it did not occur to him that there was anything derogatory in this comparison. He, personally, was very fond of cheese. He and Clem would talk for long and pleasant hours.

Clem one day suggested that Henry buy the house in which he and Shirley lived. "You've got some money saved, I know," he explained.

"Yes," Henry agreed. "Yes, I have. But I kind of like to have some handy. For a rainy day." Felt very wise and provident.

"Well," said Clem, "I always figure a man's got a right to look for fair weather when he's young. He don't have to expect rain and bad days till he gets along. You could pay something down, and I'd raise the rent a little on you; and in a few years the place would be yours, all paid up. Then you wouldn't have to pay rent any more."

He added: "Property is going up around here, too. Things

are building out this way. And the electric cars will make it worth more. I guess you could sell any time, and make a little."

"If I got sick," Henry reminded him, "it would be kind of bad. Or something happened to me."

"Well," Prior assured him, "Shirley and Mat's all I've got; and I'm fixed comfortable. Come to that, I'd take care of them."

The matter, begun in such a desultory fashion, was discussed and rediscussed thereafter. Shirley, it appeared, approved the step. "Paying rent's bad," she told Henry. "Just so much money gone for good. And there'd be less to pay on the house all the time. It would be a way of saving."

"I want to do things for you," he said, half rebelliously. "I want to take you places, sometimes, Shirley." Laughed faintly. "You know some day we're going to go to Africa."

"I'd rather be here than in Africa," she assured him. "It's the best thing you could do for me, to buy the house. We don't have to have so many things, Henry; and we'll want to save up for college."

He looked at her quickly; and her eyes were warm; and he looked away again and said gruffly: "Sure, that's so, too." A vista unconsidered opened in that moment before his half-bewildered vision. College. This baby of theirs, then, would grow to be a man. He was sure it would be a boy baby. Would grow, then, to be a man. College? A word vague to Henry, having little body, form or substance. Yet, apparently desirable. Desirable, at least, to Shirley; and he knew her wisdom. Desirable, then, to himself; and to this boy child of his. And his eyes filled and he brushed the tears aside; they were tears of pride at the thought that this baby who was not yet born would grow to be a man. So many preparations must for that manhood then be made. The tiny garments Shirley and her mother and Mary had been sewing; these were but a beginning. He had in his thoughts, curiously, a glimpse of a straight and stalwart boy. Taller than himself, please God! As tall as Shirley. Absurdly enough, he prayed that night that his son might not be a small man.

In the end he decided to accept Clem's suggestion; and he had at first, when the thing was done, a stark sense of poverty and of defenselessness. But the change made, on the surface, no difference in their affairs. It meant only a shrinkage of his balance in the savings bank; meant a slight and negligible in-

crease in the amount he paid each month to Clem. In return for these sacrifices he got the thrill of ownership; he strode his small domain with head high and heart bursting. He would have, he decided, a garden when another year came round.

II

Toward the end of the summer, there were currents stirring in the newspaper world which somewhat distracted his attention from affairs at home. He met Ben Harris one day, and had word of George Nye. "We're living together now," Ben explained. "Up on the Hill. Come up and see us sometime."

George, Ben said, was unchanged. "He's a floorwalker now," he explained, and chuckled. "He wears a long coat in the store. Looks funny as the devil."

Ben did not repeat his offer of a job; but a week or so later David Pell told Henry a rumor he had heard. "True, too, I think," he explained gravely.

The rumor was that the *Tribune* was in some financial difficulty; that the property no longer showed its former profitable return. "The *Standard* has cut into our circulation," David explained. "Ben's responsible for that. I hear they're going to get him to come over to the *Tribune* and take charge."

"What about Pat Dryden?" Henry loyally demanded; and David made a noncommittal movement with his hand.

The predicted change did in fact occur, and in September. Ben Harris was at this time just short of forty years old. He was a square, sturdy, youthful man with an enthusiastic manner of speech and a vigorous and active interest in the world about him. When in the past he had preached the new gospel of journalism of which he was an apostle, Henry, listening to him, had felt at times a curious shrinking sense of shame, as though his own privacy had been invaded. He had thought at the time that he would never be willing to work under Ben's direction; but he had not voiced this feeling. Subsequently, when the success of the *Standard* under Harris' handling seemed to demonstrate the wisdom of his methods, Henry's convictions were shaken. Yet now, when Harris came to the *Tribune*, Henry went home at night full of this small

problem of his. He would have liked to confide it all to Shirley, but she must be protected from worry and concern, so he said no word to her.

He did, however, have some talk with Clem Prior in the matter. "Of course," he explained, "I've known Ben ever since I was a boy. He used to come to the house even before we moved to the South End; and my father liked hearing him talk. But—the way he does things makes me uncomfortable. Prying into things, and printing the things he does. The way he did with George Nye.

He was shaken by the discovery that Clem could give him no comfort. "I don't know," Clem said. "I read the *Tribune,* because you work for them. But I like to read the *Standard,* too. It's kind of lively and interesting."

"It's like looking into people's windows at night," Henry protested; and Clem chuckled.

"Well, that might be interesting, sometimes, too," he confessed; and Henry was silent, confused, feeling himself somehow alone against the world.

He had, later on, some talk with Harris himself. Ben was by no means blind to Henry's scruples; and a few days after he assumed the duties of his new position, he stopped at Henry's side and spoke to him. "Come out and have a bite with me, Henry," he suggested. "I want to talk to you."

They went to a café in an alley near the office; and when they had ordered and before the victuals were served, Ben leaned across the table resting on his elbows, smiling at the younger man. "How old are you, Henry?" he asked. "About twenty-five?"

"Twenty-three," Henry confessed.

Ben nodded. "You seem older. You're a quiet sort, serious, sober. I suppose that's the reason." He chuckled a little. "You don't approve of me, do you, Henry?"

Henry felt his heart pounding; and he remembered, abruptly, that he was married, that there was a baby coming, that he had bought a house and obligated himself to steady payments. But Ben's eye was kind.

"I guess I don't know, Ben," he said honestly. "I probably wouldn't print some of the things you do."

"People like to read them," Ben pointed out.

"They'd just as soon read different things if you printed them."

Ben shook his head, a little sadly. "No," he argued. "No; that's been tried. You can't go back of the facts. The circulation figures tell the story, Henry." He hesitated, then added:

"You remember George Nye's trouble. You resented my printing that, didn't you?"

"Well, I like George," Henry explained.

"So do I," Ben pointed out. "We're living together now. I've known George twenty years. You know, he reads the *Standard* every morning. Likes it, too."

Henry flushed a little. "I thought he'd had enough trouble himself, without reading about other people's," he commented.

Ben nodded. "But here's the answer," he added. "If you're going to print that kind of stuff, you can't refuse to print it just because it happens to a friend of yours. That's not playing the game."

He made Henry forget to be afraid for his job; they talked for a long hour together, and when they went back to the office, Henry was somewhat reassured.

"I'm not going to give you that sort of thing to do," Ben told him. "It's not your game. You and Dave Pell and Charlie Niblo and Tom Pope are fine for the respectable stuff. If Bob Proctor'll keep sober, he can do what I want; and I'm hiring Marty Bull. Every reporter in town hates him; but he gets the stuff. And Jimmy Horn will make a hand, too. And I'm trying to land Joe Downing. But I just wanted to get straight with you, Henry. You've got a job here, as long as you want it; and if I ever ask you to do anything you don't want to do, just tell me so and I'll get someone else. That all right with you, is it?"

Henry found himself loving Ben Harris like a brother; and he swelled with grateful pride. "I'm proably wrong," he said humbly.

"The first thing is to make people read the paper," Ben told him, in a rare burst of full confidence. "After that, we can sober down and they'll stick to us. Give me a chance, son; and I'll look out for you."

"Look here," Henry exclaimed. "I wish you'd come out to the house, sometime. Shirley'd like knowing you."

"I'll come," Ben promised. "Any time you say."

There was, during Ben's first weeks at his new desk, a good deal of conjecture in the office; some uneasiness as to the future. The men had their eye on Pat Dryden, wondering what he would do. They talked it over, at times, among themselves. Henry told David Pell that Dryden ought to resign.

"He can't stay round here," he urged, "and take orders from Ben. He must be sixty years old."

"Just fifty," David said gravely. "He's not an old man, Henry. And he is a very able citizen." He added thoughtfully:

"I think he'll stay. If he quit, it would look like petty spite; like a little boy refusing to play when he loses. And—he's been here nearly thirty years."

Everyone was somewhat relieved when, after a fortnight, Dryden was sent to Washington to serve as correspondent there. Jimmy Horn had been, since Harris took control, inclined to grin at Dryden and to predict dire things for the man; he saw in this move a demotion.

"Pat's been kicked upstairs," he said, with a relish.

Henry resented this rather fiercely; and but for David Pell's intervention, he and Jimmy might have come to blows. But David was able to reassure Henry.

"I think Pat would rather be there," he said. "Certainly it's a much more responsible position, in a lot of ways; it carries more dignity, is more likely to be permanent. A news editor don't amount to much; but a Washington correspondent is entitled to respect, and gets it. Don't be sorry for Dryden, Henry. He doesn't want you to."

There came other changes on the paper. The return, for example, of Marty Bull; and the immediate intimacy between him and Jimmy Horn. Both Jimmy and Bull had, during the summer, gone to Chicago to the World's Fair; they had a good deal to say in the office of the things seen there, of what they did. The journey gave them, even in Henry's eyes, a certain eminence. Mary Day's father and mother had also made the trip, travelling on an excursion train; they had brought home a sheaf of spun glass, which Mary gave Shirley. Dresses were actually made from it, they reported. Shirley thought the stuff pretty and kept it in a small vase on the mantel, like a clump of flowers. Henry ventured to speak of this trophy to Jimmy one day; but Jimmy laughed aloud.

"Huh! Spun glass? I didn't see any of that," he said. "I spent my time other ways."

And Henry felt himself belittled and discomfited.

In the paper itself there were small changes. During the summer, the news of baseball began to occupy a full page of space. Harris introduced the use of small cartoons to lighten up the advertising pages. Headlines grew larger; and local news, particularly of the more sensational sort, became more prominent. Sometimes Harris emphasized a first page story by inserting one or two leads between the lines of type. The story which seemed to him most important for the day was placed in the third or fourth column from the right, on the first page, adorned and embellished in what fashions were open to

him. The headlines on a local story of relatively slight interest were larger than had been the heading on the story of the terrific fire four years before.

Some of the fever of this new life entered Henry's blood; there were, too, ambitions working in him. Harris liked him; he saw a chance for advancement. And now and then he suggested stories that might be investigated, wrote memorandums and laid them on Ben's desk. Harris always thanked him; but nothing came of these efforts on Henry's part. He persisted in them, working hard, spending long and longer hours at his desk. To be able to work was relief and anodyne; when he was at home, his mind not thus engaged, he worried sadly, for Shirley was near her time.

III

They expected the baby in October, and Henry was worried about that; but he had other worries too. Mary was in trouble. Harry Coster had gone to Philadelphia in August. Henry, as it happened, saw him the day before he went away and heard Harry's explanation of the trip.

"I've got to go over to attend to a little business," he said, in that patronizing tone which he was apt to adopt towards Henry. "I've made connections with some big men there. This town's dead! There's no one here ready to take a chance on anything. But I've got some men over there ready to back me, and I'm going over to fix it up. I'll be back in a couple of weeks, and then, boy, things will begin to move!"

But Harry did not return in a fortnight as he had promised. Instead, Mary had a letter from him, written in a somewhat querulous tone, explaining that his negotiations had been delayed and that his return must be. This came early in September, and it contained no address, so that Mary could not write to him. But a day or two later she had another letter, asking her to send him fifty dollars, and this time he bade her direct it in care of the general delivery. She managed to find the money and forwarded it, urging Harry to come home.

"I'm afraid you'll never make the fortune you expect out of the transformer," she wrote. "But you can go back to your old job here, and we'll get along fine."

She had no answer; had had since that time no word or line from him. But late in September she found that he had borrowed money in her name, and his creditors came seeking payment. She was unable to satisfy them, and the worry told on her. Harry had for years drained her of all her surplus income, and she had many little debts here and there, found herself pressed and straitened. The boarding house was fallen on hard and bitter times.

Thus Henry had Mary on his mind. In her extremity, although she did not come to him for help, yet she confided to him her difficulties; for Henry was the only one to whom she could confide. He told her, ruefully, he could do nothing for her, could do nothing to help her lift the load of debts Coster had left for her to bear.

"We've bought the house, you know, Mary," he explained. "And we pay a bigger rent, so that some of it goes to pay for the house. And with the baby coming and all, and the doctor's bills. . . ."

"Bless you!" said Mary heartily. "I don't want anything from you, Henry. I know you've got all you can carry. But it does me good to tell you about it, seems to me."

And matters stood in this wise at the time the baby was born.

2

This arrival so long expected occurred late in October. It was so far as Henry was concerned an ordeal through which he passed in a state of torpor, scarce conscious of his own sufferings. Shirley was a little past her time; but Doctor Snow assured them this was no matter for surprise or for concern. "Sometimes they're late and sometimes they're early," he told Henry cheerfully. "But they usually manage to get here, one way or another, in the course of time."

It was Doctor Snow who had attended Henry's hurts that day he first met Shirley. He was a little man with a shock of gray hair, and twinkling eyes, and a way of treating every catastrophe as though it had been long anticipated. A comfortable man in any family crisis. Henry wholly trusted him.

"Just put it out of your minds," he advised them. "Shirley's fine. I've known her since she first came along, and you don't have to worry about her. Forget this, till you're ready to send for me. Time enough to start making an ass of yourself then." And he clapped Henry on the back.

"Suppose you're not there," Henry suggested doubtfully; but the physician chuckled.

"Bless you, it's my business to be there," he replied.

Mrs. Prior, toward the last, had fallen into the habit of spending the night with them; and she was a comfort to Henry when the time did come. Shirley roused him; and still stupid with sleep he listened to what she had to say, and then went to fetch her mother; and Mrs. Prior shut him out of the room while she spoke with Shirley, and then came out and told Henry, in a brisk and business-like tone, to go to Doctor Snow's house and bid him come. Henry dressed in an abstracted daze, and not till he got out of doors—it was a night rainy and cold—did he realize that he had forgotten his hat. This puzzled and interested him, because he felt perfectly assured and calm. Yet he forgot to go back for the hat in question, and Doctor Snow laughed at him for the omission and lent Henry headgear for the homeward journey. "You'll have to go it alone," he told Henry. "I'm going to drive around and pick up Mrs. Moody."

So Henry hurried home, and had a little while with Shirley before the doctor and Mrs. Moody came; and Shirley, though her brow was wet and her lips were pale, smiled at him in gentle reassurance and held a level tone. Afterward, however, he was banished; and no one paid him any particular attention during the ensuing hours. Dotor Snow sat with him, most of the time, departing only now and then to the other room. Henry seemed to himself to be perfectly calm; but his ears were rather attentive to the murmurs of sound from Shirley's room than to the doctor's conversation. By and by a gray dawn showed in the windows, where the rain came slatting so venomously; and Mrs. Moody made a cup of coffee for Henry, and a bit of toast and jam. He tried to put it aside; but she said in a grim impatience:

"Don't argue with me, Mr. Beeker. I've got enough on my hands without your fainting or something, the first thing a body knows."

Henry smiled at the absurdity of this; but he ate and drank as she directed. There was, he thought, something vicious in the spatter of the rain; and he began to be lonely for Shirley and wished he might see her. By and by he asked the doctor, doubtfully, whether this were possible; but the other shook his head.

"She's got one young man to take care of, or will have pretty soon," he replied. "You'd just be an extra load for her."

So Henry stayed where he was.

Toward eight o'clock he began to be conscious of a swifter tempo in the movements of the doctor and Mrs. Moody, as they passed, occasionally, through this room where he sat; and they had no longer any attention to give him. He decided that Shirley was gone. The realization did not make him particularly unhappy; he accepted it as a thing expected, discounted in advance. And he began to readjust his life to meet this fact; tried to plan what he would do without her. The baby did not enter into these calculations of his. He considered the funeral arrangements, and the kind of stone that should be placed on Shirley's grave; and he wondered whether he would ever marry again. Mrs. Prior came through the room, wringing her hands, and stalked up and down in the hall outside the door; and Henry knew it was his task to go and comfort her in her bereavement, but he did not want to talk to anyone. He was sorry he had not said goodby to Shirley when he saw her last; he should have done so. This omission, he decided, would always haunt him.

Mrs. Moody presently came in and stood before him, but he did not raise his eyes to see the tragic mask her countenance must wear; till the woman said morosely:

"Well, ain't you going to look at him!"

So Henry realized that something about her was squawking, in a curious mechanical way; and he looked up and saw a roll of blankets in her capacious arms; and he got shakily to his feet and looked upon the appalling countenance of his son. From which the squawks emerged.

He poked the blankets aside, unable to believe his eyes had seen aright; and he looked at Mrs. Moody doubtfully.

"What happened to it?" he asked.

Then he was swept aside by Mrs. Prior; he was buffeted by Mrs. Moody's heroic laughter. And a little later he was on his knees, drenched in his own happy tears, by Shirley's side.

His recuperation was incredibly swift. Half an hour later he was on his way to the office, swelling with a great and happy pride. On the way he bought a box of cigars for the men on the staff, and all that day and for a day or two thereafter he accepted complacently their jocular congratulations.

The baby was named Dan, after Henry's father. Shirley was soon almost herself again, and the newcomer grew and thrived.

IV

Henry was conscious during this winter, and more and more in the immediate years, that just as there was a stirring and a growth within himself, so was there change all about him. The horse car was passing rapidly; and with the coming of electric cars which reached out in all directions from the city, the pulse of life quickened. At first, to ride upon an electric car had been an adventure; there had been a thrilling joy in clinging to the front platform or the rear, while the car whirled around a curve. Nowadays this glamour was gone; the cars were no more than an utility, their wonder passed. The change went deeper than the surface, too. People began to look forward to the end of the century as to the closing of a chapter; there was a sense of great things impending, an expectation in the world.

Henry, in his still novel estate of manhood, husbandhood, fatherhood, and in his capacity as an owner of property, was a part of all this. As a reporter he had at least a spectator's part in the events that went forward; and he had a keen sense of his own prospective share in that which was to come. The pace of life was quickening, so that men who had been content to move sedately now found themselves hurrying as they went to and fro upon their small concerns. Curiosity as to the outer world was becoming a more general human trait. Henry, who had begun by being conscious of the blacksmith shop, the rainy cobbled street that came down the Hill, the umbrellas passing and the broad rumps of the horses below his window, found his horizon continually widening. There was a flux and flow in life, and the currents tugged at him. Pat Dryden wrote him a letter from Washington; he realized, to his own awed surprise, that Dryden had liked him, had some confidence in his abilities. His own interest in these abilities of his, which had been asleep during the months of his wooing of Shirley, and his marriage, and this waiting for their son to be born, began to wake once more. Ben Harris had quickened the *Tribune*; Henry felt himself quickened too. . . .

He had a great deal of pride, pride in himself. The estate

of reporter, to which he had risen, still held in his eyes some glamour. He knew—Tom Pope and Charlie Niblo and the others had made this clear to him—that to many folk a reporter was a creature not particularly deserving of respect. About this time, President Eliot of Harvard, at a dinner in Philadelphia, made some criticism of the men of the fourth estate. He was quoted as saying that reporters in Boston were drunkards, thieves, dead beats and bummers. The utterance aroused a storm of indignation, some of it vocal; and the matter was discussed editorially and privately among newspaper men. It was explained on the ground that Doctor Eliot's own experiences with reporters had been unpleasant; and there was a tendency to waive the charge aside, but the effect upon Henry was disturbing. He was proud of being a reporter; he knew other newspaper men, and liked and respected them; his loyalty to them and to his craft was intense and fine. But he began to perceive that there might be truth in that which the great educator said.

"He's a fine man," he told Shirley one night. He always liked talking to Shirley about the things which interested him. She never made any save assenting and comforting comments, her head bent above the sewing which was likely to engage her fingers. But she listened understandingly.

"Doctor Eliot's a great man," he repeated. "And he wouldn't say a thing like that unless he thought it was true. It's not true of most of them. But I can see how he might think it about a man like Marty Bull, for instance. Or Jimmy Horn. I don't like them, either."

And he added ruefully: "Of course, a lot of them do drink. Bob Proctor does. Once in a while he gets drunk. . . . But they work hard, and they don't steal. . . ."

And again, thinking aloud: "Nobody ought to be able to say that, Shirley. It's a fine profession, for fine men. We've got to keep it so. A newspaper man has a lot of influence. He can do a lot of good. He ought to be a fine man."

"If they were all like you, dear," said Shirley, looking across at him.

"I want to be a great editor some day," he confessed, his eyes abstracted. "Like Greeley, or Dana, or one of those. I don't mean just like Ben Harris, a news editor. But writing editorials, and having people read them, and talk about what I say and all. Some day."

He perceived the fact that the first step must be through the news end of the paper. "But I might write editorials sometimes, when I think of them, for practise," he decided. And

thereafter, at intervals, he did so, but for years never reached the point of showing them to anyone save Shirley or her father. They were, he could discover, immature, unconvincing; lacked the salt of age.

"I'm young, that's all," he would say. "But I'm going to learn."

He began that year to read about Africa, too. "So I'll know what I'm talking about when I write my book," he explained to Shirley. It was David Pell who by a chance remark turned his attention to Stanley; and Henry plunged into the literature of that man's life wtih a zeal which waxed and grew. He pored over clippings in the reference department of the *Tribune,* and he discovered and read so much of Stanley's own writings as came within his reach. The fact that Stanley was also named Henry seemed to him at one time to have a thrilling though a secret significance; and Stanley had also been at the beginnings of his great career a newspaper man, had met, upon his return with news of Livingstone, just such a storm of abuse and criticism as—Henry thought—reporters still received. "In Darkest Africa" he devoured with the ardor of a worshipper in the temple; and he tried to persuade Shirley to read it also. She sought to do so; but the baby took too much of her time. . . . When a year or two later Stanley published "My Early Travels," Henry's delight in reading the chronicles was so great that David Pell suggested he write a review of the book. Henry did so, and submitted it to Ben Harris; he had written some twelve hundred words, and he had the unutterable delight of seeing the review printed under his own name; felt for the first time the splendid pride involved in emerging from anonymity.

It was by this time obvious to him that such a man as Stanley must be the hero of the novel he meant to write; and he worked, spasmodically, upon this book of his. The title thrilled him unspeakably; the words "I Speak of Africa" could bring tears to his eyes. But this was with him a secret thing, a thing known only to Shirley and Clem Prior and himself. It was long before he confided even in David Pell.

These were years full of bursting eagerness and zeal; of shy ambitions, and of high desires.

Yet there was apt to be, between his work and his life at home, a sharp line of division. The two worlds did not intermingle. When he went to the city in the morning, he put Shirley behind him, never spoke of her except in reply to a direct inquiry. David Pell often asked after Shirley and the baby; but always quietly, and in a manner not to embarrass

Henry. Ben Harris sometimes spoke of them, in a fashion almost perfunctory; and seemed not to hear Henry's furtive replies. It had not at first occurred to Henry to keep silence about his life at home; he was proud of Shirley, proud of his own estate as a property owner. But he found that Marty Bull and Jimmy Horn were apt to jeer at such matters; that Marty in particular went out of his way to turn them into discomfiture for Henry. So learned to hold his peace. There were times when he wished to fling himself at Marty with fists flying in destructive wise; but the project had a futility about it, and Henry was always a level-headed man, not given to impetuous and heedless ways.

But when he went home at night it was to plunge into the life there as into a refreshing pool at the end of a hot and steaming day. There was, in spring and summer, his garden to engage him; he liked the feel of crumbling earth between his fingers; found an unspeakable delight in the first bright green of lettuce breaking through the smooth loam and the peeping twin leaves of peas; and he had something amounting to affection for radishes, those friendly and companionable vegetables which at the least provocation grew so amiably and in such profusion. Henry was never a particularly successful gardener; but he could grow radishes.

He liked to take his son upon his shoulders and carry him into the garden and show him these growing things; he would set the baby down and Dan would plunge his small fists into the soft loam exploringly, till Shirley came running from the house with protests full of fond indignation. The baby liked his father; greeted him with outstretched arms, while Shirley stood in the background encouraging these manifestations. Henry knew that Shirley skilfully built up the excitement which anticipated his own homecoming; could hear her say, as he came in at the front gate: "Who's coming? Who's that coming now? It's daddy!" And then the baby would scream a delighted welcome to him. He knew Shirley was responsible; yet found in these greetings keenest pleasure just the same.

During the first winter of young Dan's life, Mary was much with them. Shirley had no servant, and though she seemed to recover quickly from the ordeal of maternity, yet her strength did not at once suffice for all the tasks she had to do. Mrs. Prior helped; but Mary came, at first on Sundays, then more often; and she busied herself with tending the baby, and relieved Shirley of so many cares and such an infinite number of small tasks. Henry was not particularly observant; yet even he saw that in these activities Mary was not only happy

but also miserably sad. He saw that when she played with the baby, though her lips smiled and her voice was gay, there was sometimes tears behind her thick lenses. She had always wept with an irritating ease; but these were tears Henry could understand.

For Harry Coster had not come back from Philadelphia. He was probably not even in Philadelphia now. Mary had, she told Henry, written to him a number of times without reply. "And now the letters come back to me," she explained wearily. "I expect he forgot to leave his address behind."

Henry was inwardly furious, boiling with rage and bafflement; but because there was nothing he could do, he pretended to believe that Coster would presently return. Said at first: "It's just happened so." And later: "He'll probably step in on you some day." And finally: "I expect the business has gone wrong, and he hates to come back and confess it. Probably he's lost all your money and can't face you now."

And Mary would nod assentingly. "I know he doesn't mean to worry me," she said at first. And then: "Sometimes I think maybe he's been hurt in an accident." And at last: "He needn't be afraid of me. I know he did the best he knew how."

But she spoke at last one sentence full of surrender. "Of course, Henry, I'm older than Harry is. I knew that from the start; but I thought maybe it wouldn't matter so."

She was in fact seven or eight years older than Coster; but Henry tried to minimize this. "You seem younger, Mary," he assured her.

"I feel kind of old sometimes lately, Henry," she confessed. "It seems to me I'm changing, that way."

Her boarding house, it appeared, was fallen upon evil times. There were necessary repairs which had not been made, could not be made. Her margin of profit had, for some reason not to be understood, been shrinking; yet when she tried to let rooms at a higher rate, she failed. Henry thought she seemed to be slackening; he discovered a loosening of the fibre of her life. She had been for a while so crisp and sure and competent.

Late in the spring after the baby was born, it was decided that she should come and live with them. "You can help Shirley a lot," Henry explained. "And she likes you. Don't you, Shirley?"

"I'll be mighty glad to have you, Mary," Shirley agreed. "And the baby loves you so."

Mary made unhappy protest, clinging pitifully to this independence which had for a while been hers. But in the end, under the slow pressure of circumstance, she yielded and

did as they urged her to do. "I always liked taking care of folks," she confessed ruefully at last. "The way I did you and your father, Henry."

"Guess we need taking care of, too," Henry agreed.

He had his doubts; felt that her presence might put upon himself an additional burden. But they were to find that this was not the case. There was room for her in the house; their bills for food did not appreciably increase; and Mary herself took to sewing for some of the women in the neighborhood, and added her small income from this source to the common purse. Also at times she resumed her china painting; but when after months she found it offered no financial return, she abandoned it again.

Her presence did so lighten Shirley's burden that Shirley's health improved; and the arrangement by degrees drifted into permanence. They heard nothing from Coster at all.

In the fall of that year, Henry one day repeated his invitation to Ben Harris to come out to dinner; made it definite. And Harris suggested that he bring George Nye along.

"George is pretty lonely, in some ways," he explained. "Hasn't many friends. He used to like you mighty well, Henry."

Henry hesitated. "Mary lives with us now," he suggested, and Harris asked:

"They used to like each other, didn't they?"

"She'd have married George, if she hadn't had me and father to take care of," Henry agreed. "George asked her to. I guess she still likes him just as well."

"What do you think?" Ben prompted. "Think it would bother her to see him?"

"No, bring him along," Henry decided. "Maybe it would cheer her up some. She's unhappy a lot of the time. Except when she's taking care of the baby."

So George and Ben Harris came together to Henry's home. When they appeared, Harris had a word with Henry. "He didn't want to come," he explained. "I had to make him."

"I told her he was coming," Henry confessed. "She didn't say anything."

But what fears he may have had proved groundless. George and Mary, alike forewarned, rose to the occasion. George had been something of a clown, in the old days; he seemed this evening in high good humor, and they found his mirth infectious and provocative, and laughed with him. Ben and Henry laughed consumedly; and Shirley chuckled, and even Mary

smiled in her quiet fashion behind her glasses, and when the two departed she said:

"It's been nice, seeing you again, George."

He was, at that, uneasy; held her hand a moment while he groped for words. Henry, watching them, remembered suddenly how George had used to look. He had as a young man a certain antic humor in his eye, but now he was growing bald, his high forehead was bare, and his eyes were sombre things. Henry wondered just how old he was. Fifty, perhaps. An old man.

"It's a long time," he said to Mary thoughtfully; then laughed robustly. "Remember that bike Ben and I bought, that we brought down to show off to you one day. And I fell on the curb in front of the door. . . ."

So he and Ben got away, leaving them all a-smile; and Henry chuckled again at the memory of that awkward, high-wheeled bicycle. He and Shirley that night harked back to Henry's bicycle; the one that had brought them together, had deposited him, bleeding and unconscious, at her feet.

"I've never got another," Henry confessed. "Too old for one, probably. But we'll have to get one for the baby by and by."

He was more and more apt, nowadays, to think of what the future must hold for this boy of his. About this time he gave up smoking. "Don't want to set him a bad example," he explained to Shirley. "And it's expensive, too."

"You've never smoked cigarettes, anyway," she reminded him. "They're the worst things, for boys."

"Stunt his growth," he agreed; and added ruefully: "Mary's always thought smoking kept me from being any bigger."

"You're big enough," Shirley told him stoutly; and he smiled at her.

"Doesn't bother you, to have a husband smaller than you are?"

"Not as long as that husband is you," she told him. He thought how sweet she was, how happily his life now ran. Laid his arm about her waist as they went up to bed.

Their second baby would arrive in January.

2

Life assumed day by day for Henry new interest and complexity. It was not so much that his acquaintance widened as that he knew more clearly and more intimately those persons who were his friends. He discovered that each one of them

held depths not immediately apparent; found it more and more true each year that in the lives about him drama moved, and ambition was stirring, and griefs were bravely borne. Clem Prior, Shirley's father, was fond of Henry and the two were much together, sitting in the summer evenings upon the porch of Clem's house or of Henry's. Prior was at this time about fifty years old, but because his hair was white and his cheeks so pink, he seemed older; and he had the point of view which goes with elder years. He was given to deploring, in a half-humorous fashion, the way of the times. They sat one night and saw young Mat, eighteen now, trundle around from the back of the house his bicycle and ride away; and Henry said:

"These new wheels are fine, aren't they? A lot better than the one that pitched me over the wall. They'll be riding the mile under two minutes any time now."

Clem, his straight-stemmed pipe precisely bisecting his countenance as it depended from his firm lips, puffed thoughtfully. "Riding fast and going nowhere," he commented. "It used to be a man could take his horse and go for a drive in comfort; but now these things are all over the road like ants. No decent horse will stand them."

"But they've come to stay," Henry reminded him. "The horses will have to get used to them."

"It's the scorchers that bother me," Clem insisted. "I don't mind if they ride at a decent speed. But I've told Mat if he gets into trouble, he'll have to get out of it, the best he can."

"Mat's all right," Henry urged. He added curiously: "Through high school, isn't he? What is he going to do?"

"He wants to come into the store," Clem explained. "I did think," he added thoughtfully, "of letting him go to college; but he don't want to. He's got a girl."

"She'll keep him out of trouble," Henry suggested, smiling a little. "Getting married young's a good thing. Steadies a man down. It's done it for me. Saving money now. . . ."

They drifted into talk of Henry's affairs. He had had, of late, another small increase in pay from Ben Harris; and the payments on the house were increased accordingly. "You'll own it, inside six years," Clem told him; but after a silence, as though the matter were on his mind, he spoke of Mat again and of the bicycle. Clem thought there should be new laws to control this traffic; and Henry agreed with him that they might be necessary. The law had always been a buckler and a shield; it did not occur to them that law might fail them now.

The bicycle was to assume a place of prime importance in Henry's life. With the development of the machine to a point near perfection, its popularity had enormously increased; and the *Tribune*, under Ben Harris, took official notice of this fact. More and more space began to be given to cycle races, to cycling clubs, to possible tours about the countryside. The manufacturers and retailers of bicycles were prepared to advertise their wares; it was inevitable that they should turn to those mediums which reached the cycling public. Ben Harris was not only an editor with a sixth sense for the public mind, but he was also a good business man; he sought to attract the public these advertisers wanted, and the increased circulation which resulted was no surprise to him. At first the material to be printed was collected haphazard, printed as it came; then as a matter of editorial make-up it began to be grouped on certain pages; and thus there appeared the necessity for a cycle editor, a man whose task it should be to survey the whole field, collect copy, cover important cycling events. Harris began to look about him for such a man; and at first he tried Jimmy Horn in the place, and Jimmy swelled importantly under his responsibilities.

Henry gave the matter no immediate attention. He read the cycling news, as did everyone; he discussed the bicycle as a public problem. But at this time his life at home was filled to crowding, engaging all his waking hours.

Their baby had come early in January; it proved to be a girl, named Cynthia after Shirley's mother, but it appeared for a time that she would scarce survive. Shirley found herself unable to nurse the baby as long as she wished; and the difficulty of finding a proper ration was protracted interminably, while the child whimpered miserably for weeks on end. When Henry came home it was to ask first of all:

"How is she tonight, Shirley?"

And Shirley, who managed always courage, would reply: "She ate well today, Henry. It seemed to agree with her."

But though there were intervals of a day or two when Cynthia seemed indeed to thrive, the structure of their hopes in the end seemed always to collapse again. Either the mixture they provided would not stay down, or it failed of proper digestion; and the weary business of experimentation must be begun once more. There were sleepless nights for all of them, when Mary Beeker and Mrs. Prior and Shirley took turns in attendance on Cynthia; and there were times when they were all so nervously exhausted that Henry tried his hand. On one occasion it was necessary to starve Cynthia for

two full days; and when her small internal workings had rid themselves of the obnoxious victuals, they demanded food, and she voiced this demand vociferously. Yet she must, Doctor Snow warned them, be fed very slowly, a little at a time; and Shirley could not bear this protracted torture, and Mary was down with a cold and so forbidden contact with the baby. So Henry sat all one long Sunday beside the crib, offering at fifteen-minute intervals diluted barley water by the teaspoonful, seeking by every means he knew to tide over the times of waiting between these meagre rations.

The ordeal left him weak and shaken, so that he slept some fourteen hours on end; and later still, despairing of the dietary formula Doctor Snow suggested, Henry took command of the situation. "He hasn't been able to find anything, and I can't do any worse," he said. "I'm going to make a formula for her myself."

He did so, poring over pamphlets and figures to a painful length; but by some extraordinary chance he was successful. Cynthia took the food he offered, relished it, began immediately to gain. Shirley had been fearful of the heat of the coming summer; but by the first of June Cynthia was plump and bounding with health, and their cares for her were eased.

But they had other worries. No word had come from Harry Coster; and Henry saw with some uneasiness that between Mary and George Nye the old feeling was sprung to life again. Mary, gone to town one morning in April to shop for Shirley, encountered George in the store; and she told him about it when she came home.

"He looked fine," she said wistfully. "Dressed so nicely. I asked him to come out again. I thought you wouldn't mind."

And George did come. Formally, on a Sunday afternoon, stiff and uncomfortable in his long coat. But after a little he forgot his awkwardness and was as gay as he had used to be. Henry, watching him, had that old impression that George was not so funny as he thought himself; but the impression was amplified now by his perception of the man's unhappiness. George, he saw, laughed and jested for fear of being found out; for fear his sadness would be manifest. And he watched Mary with an eye in which no laughter dwelled.

Henry was uneasy about the situation; and he confessed his fears that night to Shirley. "After all, Mary's married," he pointed out. "And Coster's the sort to make trouble for her if he can."

Shirley was indignant. "That's so foolish, Henry," she insisted. "Poor Mary gets some pleasure out of seeing him."

"That's all right," he pointed out. "I'm a newspaper man and I run into that sort of thing. There's apt to be a mess about it."

"If I were her," Shirley declared, "I'd divorce Mr. Coster and marry George. He'd be so good to her. And she ought to have some chance to be happy, Henry."

"She can't divorce Harry without going into the court, and she'd have to have some evidence, and we don't even know where he is. Of course, he's deserted her," he added gravely. "But the thing I don't want is a mess that will get in the papers."

"You could keep it out," Shirley told him; but Henry shook his head.

"No; Ben Harris would print it."

"I don't believe it," Shirley insisted.

"Yes," Henry assured her. "Ben's funny that way. He's a fine man and a great editor; but he thinks it's his duty to print things, no matter who it hurts. You remember when George's wife killed herself, he printed that."

They were preparing for bed. That is to say, Shirley was already abed, Henry moving slowly in the same direction while he talked. She must have felt some truth in what he said, and resented it; and her resentment took the form of irritation at him. She said impatiently:

"For goodness' sake, Henry, get undressed and come to bed. You're the slowest man!"

"I'm coming," he assured her contritely; and hurried his movements. But a moment later stopped again to say: "Just the same, they ought to be careful." Stood considering this till she startled him into activity again.

3

They had, a little later, a hint of the dangerous possibilities in the situation. Henry came home one night to find both Shirley and Mary disturbed and nervous. This was so apparent that he asked them what the trouble was; but they put the question aside. Not till he and Shirley were alone did he hear the story. Then Shirley told him a reporter from the *Tribune* had come to see Mary that day.

"Who was it?" Henry asked. "What did he want?"

"I didn't ask his name," Shirley confessed. "I didn't like him. A sort of a dark man, rather heavy set, with a way of grinning."

"Marty Bull!" Henry exclaimed. "Darn him, I want him

to keep away from here." He hesitated, then added: "He's always made fun of me for getting married, Shirley. I think he's always wanted to see you."

"He was mean to Mary," she said. "I shouldn't think Mr. Harris would have him on the paper. A man like that."

"What did he want?" Henry asked again.

"Why, he used to know Harry Coster," she explained. "And he hadn't seen him for a long time, and he went to look him up, at the boarding house, and got Mary's address there. He wanted to know where he was."

"What did she tell him?" Henry insisted, all his fears alert.

"She said Harry was in Philadelphia on business," Shirley explained. "She was really very wise; she didn't let him find out anything at all. But I think he knew, because he asked her if she ever heard from him. She said she did; and he grinned and asked her if it wasn't true that he had just deserted her."

This was, apparently, all that had happened; Henry's repeated questioning of Shirley, and of Mary in the morning, elicited no further fact. But he was alarmed; and he went next day to Ben Harris. Told him what had occurred.

"Did you send Marty out?" he asked.

Harris shook his head. "No," he said. "No. He does a good deal of work without assignment, you know. I suppose he's trying to dig up the story. He told me that Coster had borrowed a lot of money around here and disappeared."

"Has he turned in anything?" Henry insisted; and Harris smiled.

"No," he replied.

"I wish you wouldn't print it, if he does," Henry urged. "It'll just make my sister miserable; and she isn't very happy anyway."

"Well," the editor pointed out, "there's nothing to print, nothing to hang a story on. Unless someone sues him, or asks the police to hunt him up, or something."

"Mary won't do that," Henry promised.

"Someone he borrowed money from might try it," Harris explained. "If they did, we'd have to print the facts, I suppose."

Henry hesitated, uncertain what to say; and Harris turned to his desk, seeking escape. "Here, son," he said. "I want you to work up a couple of columns on this." He handed Henry a memorandum. "They're going to abolish the grade crossings out your way, from Faneuil out to West Newton. The thing ought to have been done before; and it looks now as though they'll get around to it this year, or maybe next. Go

down to the B & A offices and get the dope. I may want to have an editorial written on it, too."

Henry took the slip. "I wish you'd let me know if Bull turns in a story," he said insistently.

Harris nodded. "I'll want that grade crossing story tonight," he replied. And Henry perforce departed, lost himself in the business in hand. When he came back to report, it was with an additional note. The new locomotives would, he told Harris, have straight smoke-stacks instead of the mushroom shape. Harris was interested, arranged to have sketches of the new engines made to illustrate Henry's story.

Nothing came of Marty Bull's curiosity. Marty made no move, and Henry's alarm was dissipated by time. He forgot it, toward the end of the summer, in a new and engrossing interest. Harris took him to lunch one day, broached the matter there. Jimmy Horn, it appeared, was not making a success of his work; Harris asked whether Henry would undertake the business of handling the bicycle news, and Henry agreed to do so.

He threw himself into this concrete task with a furious zeal. Harris instructed him to buy cycles for himself and Shirley, and charge them to the *Tribune*, and though Shirley almost never used hers, the result was immeasurably to widen Henry's familiar world.

He made a success of his new work. He had a friendly way about him, and the persons with whom he came in contact liked him. Backed as he was by the *Tribune*, he got results. His pages attracted an increased amount of bicycle advertising; and this was reflected in Henry's own pay envelope. He felt himself more and more a part of the quickening times. Harris had by this time completely won his loyalty, and the *Tribune* commanded from him a high, almost sacrificial devotion. He was immensely proud of the paper, and of the fact that it was the leader in the journalistic innovations which crowded one upon the other's heels. The Sunday paper now printed a full page of comic drawings; the standard model was a play upon words. "A Bang Up Time" was a sketch of a man being blown up by a can of gun powder; "Three Balls" were three crying babies. "The Out-Going Mail" was a young man, a dude, being kicked down a flight of stairs. The dude was currently the target for many jibes; his presentment was to be found somewhere in the *Tribune* almost daily. His skin-tight trousers provoked the anecdote about the two Irishmen in the street car. Pat looked at a dude across the aisle and asked: "How does he get his

pants on?" And Mike retorted: "Ye dommed fool, he unscrews his feet at night!"

Henry himself drew a sketch, a recognizable likeness of a man in sailor costume and a group of four cannon. He headed it: "Assault and Battery"; and laid it, one day, on Ben Harris' desk. Ben said it was fine, laughed consumingly; but the sketch never appeared and Henry received this disappointment silently.

But he had counted on showing it to Shirley when it should appear.

Shirley and Mary were busy that summer making sofa cushions and covering them. The "summer girl" was reputed to spend her waking hours filling pillows with wild rose petals, sweet lavender, hops, or balsam needles. The bloomer had come into mild disrepute; and Henry lent the weight of his influence, through the columns of the *Tribune*, to the preferred cycling costume for women, of bloomers under an overskirt, with gaiters well up the legs. The leg-o-mutton sleeve was shrinking; he heard Shirley read aloud to Mary one night the fashion note: "The bustle invariably accompanies small sleeves." It appeared that hats were to be smaller, too.

The Washington Street subway was under construction, near the North Station. The process of rebuilding the city to more modern needs, a process never to be finished, was well begun, and the streets were already in a state of chronic disrepair and disorder. There was a cry from the cyclists for improved roads, for some measure to allay the dust evil.

In August there was a tremendous bicycle parade, organized by Henry and the *Tribune*. Henry wrote proudly next day that there were twelve thousand bicycles in line, and half a million spectators.

V

There was one man in the office toward whom Henry had always held a particular respect. This man was Tom Pope, the political writer. Years ago, on Henry's first day in the place, Jimmy Horn pointed Pope out to him; he saw a man rotund

and Pickwickian, with a twinkling eye and a wide, humorous mouth. Pope habitually wore a derby hat, somewhat toward the back of his head; he smoked a tilted cigar and his great nose testified to a genial attitude toward life and living.

Tom must have found in Henry something likeable, for he went out of his way at times to give Henry sound advice; and Henry always treasured the memory of that day when he and Pope and Charlie Niblo went around to Jake's place and sat drinking and talking together. He could have repeated, did often repeat in his own mind, some of the things Tom said that day. Pope had advised him to learn to manipulate the typewriter, then just coming into popularity; and Henry had followed this advice, had been one of the first men in the office to become proficient. He remembered that Niblo and Pope agreed that the machine would make for increased speed in the newspaper business; and he thought sometimes nowadays that this had proved to be true. The typewriter had increased the pace in the office. "Just as the bicycle increased the pace of the world," he reflected, and used this thought in his columns on the cycle page one day.

Tom Pope and Peter Hendricks and Herb Vaughn; these three men had influenced Henry in diverse ways. But Vaughn was dead, and Hendricks was dead: and of late Tom Pope had not been so well. One winter he was gravely ill; spent some weeks in a sanitarium while Marty Bull handled the State House news. And when Tom came back to the office he had lost weight; seemed to have shrunk in stature. Since then, and particularly since Ben Harris assumed the editorship of the *Tribune*, Tom had come less often to the office. His work still centered at the State House; he spent his days there, wrote his copy there. There were weeks when he appeared only on pay day; and Henry saw him less and less, and it was a long time since they had had more than passing word together. David Pell sometimes spoke of Pope to Henry, and Henry knew they occasionally saw each other. David, when he was able to find time, liked to go to the State House, to study the affairs which went forward there.

This winter, in December, Tom Pope fell one day on the ice and struck upon his knee, so that he could not walk. The accident confined him to his home; he would be unable to move about for a fortnight or more. Sometimes during Pope's occasional absences, when the demands of politics drew his attention elsewhere, Pell had covered the State House; and David was given the assignment now. About a week after

Tom's fall, David suggested to Henry that they go out and see the man.

"He'd be glad to see us, to see any one from the office," David promised; and Henry's old liking and respect for Pope was reawakened by the suggestion. He said eagerly:

"Why sure I'll go."

Pope lived in Dorchester; Pell knew the house, had been there before. Henry gave up a Sunday afternoon to the enterprise; and they found Tom, with his leg propped on a chair in front of him, sitting in a sunny window with the scattered sheets of newspapers upon the floor about his chair. He greeted them with a warmth Henry thought curiously pathetic; and he made some jest to set them laughing, and Henry laughed politely. But he thought Tom was very old, and curiously smaller than he had used to be. His head was bare, and Henry hardly remembered seeing him without his hat before. It was perhaps this, he decided, which made Tom wear so different an aspect. Henry was almost embarrassed by that bare, bald head of Tom's. It had a nakedness about it.

They fell into pleasant rambling talk of many things; spoke of the news from Cuba where insurrection was aflame. Filibustering had become a romantic adventure; and valorous boys slipped away to the island to serve with ragged revolutionaries there. Tom had had, recently, a letter from Pat Dryden in Washington.

"There's a big party for intervention," he told them. "A lot of talk about it, not yet out in the open. They're waiting to see what McKinley will do."

"What will he do?" Pell asked.

The old reporter waved his hand. "We're in the position of the man up the tree," he declared. "When a bear tackled his wife, his sympathies were with his wife; but all he could do was yell: 'Go it wife, go it b'ar!' " He chuckled at their guffaws. "Neutrality," he said, more soberly. "There's nothing else for us to do. So long as we're not directly hit, down there." He added, after a moment: "Dryden says McKinley won't intervene; but there will be a warship sent down to Havana harbor to keep an eye on things. Just to remind them that we're in the neighborhood."

"We ought to do more than that," Henry said warmly. "I'll tell you, it's a darned shame to have things going on the way they are down there."

"A lot of wrongs in the world," David suggested. "You can't right them all, Henry."

"A great story," Pope commented professionally. "There are newspaper men down there now, and there will be more. Chance for a big job to be done by the right man."

Henry's eyes were burning dreamily. "Like Stanley," he commented. "He'd get the story, and he'd write it, too. If a man like him went down there and wrote about it, I guess we'd wake up and stop things pretty soon."

Pope shook his head. "War's a serious business, Henry," he suggested. "And McKinley is a level-headed man."

David chuckled. "Lucky Bryan isn't going in, in March," he reminded them. "I'd hate to count on him."

The old political reporter smiled a little, looking out the window. "He's a great man, Dave," he said thoughtfully. "You never heard him talk, did you?" Pope, with Pat Dryden, had covered the Convention; had fallen under the spell of that oration which lifted the little-known Nebraskan at one step to the leadership of his party.

David smiled a little. "A great orator, at least," he conceded.

"The most dramatic moment American politics ever saw," said Pope. "I was there!" he sat a moment silent. "They'd been fighting like cats and dogs," he said soberly. "A brawl; nothing more. Every man in the hall was ready to hit his neighbor in the eye. And when Bryan got up, they were still grumbling and talking and stirring about, paying him no attention at all. Most of them had hardly heard of him; a good many of them were grumbling because he'd been given the last turn at bat."

He hesitated; and they waited, still and listening. "I give you my word," he said, with a little helpless movement of his hand. "Before he'd spoken three sentences, they were as quiet as—you two are now. And when he was done, they were just plain maniacs. Half an hour or an hour of bedlam. Wanted to stop proceedings and nominate him on the spot."

He grinned. "Bryan kept his head," he commented. "Told them if this enthusiasm couldn't last two or three days, it couldn't last till election day. Yes sir, a great man."

"But wrong," said Pell.

Pope wagged his head. "Just a few votes here and there would have elected him," he reminded them.

Henry asked, hesitantly: "Did you vote for him?"

"No," Pope confessed. "No, but I'd have liked to."

And Henry said no more. He had a secret sense of guilt in this matter. He was a Republican by association, by friendship, by all his contacts; but the tremendous drama of Bryan's

rise had so worked upon him that he had cast his vote for the Nebraskan. Ever since, he had been moving in a state of vague dread lest the sanctity of the ballot be violated and his crime exposed.

"I wouldn't wonder if he was right about money, too," Pope added. "It looks like hard times coming, to me."

Henry found himself quite out of his depth in the talk that followed; he had only the vaguest notions of what was meant by the phrases they used. "Free Silver" and "Sixteen to One" were familiar enough to him, acceptable enough; he had seen them in print, read them, heard them. But his loyalty was not to phrases, but to the dramatic figure of a man. The inner workings of currency and finance, into which Pope and David ventured in their talk, were meaningless to Henry; he listened inattentively, catching upon the occasional name they spoke, interested always in men rather than in things, in actions rather than in conditions.

They came back by and by to ground with which he was more familiar; spoke of the profession they served. Tom told a tale or two; old stories of great deeds. And Henry, his interest quickening, spoke of Stanley. "I expect he was the greatest reporter that ever lived, wasn't he?" he suggested.

Pope disagreed with this. "Gordon Bennett made him," he declared. "Without the *Herald* to back him, Stanley would never have gone to Africa. He was a good reporter, all right, knew copy when he saw it. That was all."

Henry's partisanship was fired; he became exclamatory in his eagerness. "No sir," he protested. "Mr. Bennett would never have heard of him, never have sent him, if he hadn't been a great reporter already. He'd been all over the world before."

"It was Africa that made him," Pope insisted, "and any good man in his place would have done as much. It's the opportunity, my son, that makes the man."

"Well, I don't think so," Henry retorted. "That is, you probably know, of course. But he'd done a lot before." He added diffidently: "Of course, there's a lot of romance in Africa, and adventure and all." Was on the point of confessing his own bent that way, but caught himself in time. Only said: "I think somebody could write a great book about it, maybe."

Pope smiled; and said: "Well, there have been a few books about Africa."

"I mean a novel," Henry blurted, and checked himself again. Tom said slowly:

"The point is, there were a lot of good reporters in the country besides Stanley. That was the heroic age in the newspaper game, Henry. I can remember. A reporter was a good deal of a fellow. Nowadays an editor is respectable enough, but a reporter is in the same class with the dog catcher. He'll steal your pet if you don't watch him. Lock the door!" He grinned ruefully. "It wasn't that way, twenty years ago."

David smiled. "You talk like an old man, Tom," he said affectionately. "The good old times! Pshaw, there's a lot of fine work being done now. New life in the business; a quickening pulse."

Pope shook his head. "In the old days they—went into Africa. Now if a reporter breaks in through the kitchen window and steals an egg out of the ice box, he's famous."

"You're wrong," David insisted. "You said yourself a while ago there was good stuff coming out of Cuba. When there's a big story, there'll always be big men to write it, Tom."

The older man rumbled and broke forth upon him. "There's always a big story if a man can see it," he declared. "It takes the eye to see. The fault's not in the times."

"Well, take Ben Harris," Pell urged. "Ben can dig a story out of things that would have been passed over ten years ago. The old way was to wait for big things and spread on them. Nowadays to take the things close home, the things people know about. That's what they like to read. Most men would rather read about the theft of their neighbor's dog than a guerrilla battle in Cuba."

"Children like playing with toys," Tom commented scornfully. "Clacking their tongues over tittle-tattle. Dave, you know as well as I do, news is news, and truck is truck, and no getting away from it."

David smiled, willing to appease the man. "But the paper has to come out just the same," he suggested; and Tom chuckled ponderously at his own jest as he replied.

"Who was it said 'I do not perceive the necessity.' "

But he seemed then to fear that he had been too vigorous in his word. "Of course, I'm not quarrelling with Ben Harris, you understand," he said appealingly. "I'd not want him to think I was criticizing him." And Henry felt faintly ashamed for him, and David said gently:

"No, of course not. You didn't mean it so, Tom."

They sat a little without speaking; and Tom looked out of the window, reflectively; and Henry saw his lips twitch a little, hinting at the old man's uneasiness. Understood, with that insight which he now was learning, that Tom was afraid

of losing his place on the *Tribune*. And Henry looked about the room and perceived its bareness there; and he wondered what family Tom had, and whether he had money saved. Thought this unlikely. "He's always had to be around with men," he reminded himself. "And that's expensive."

Tom said by and by, to Dave, abruptly: "How's your book coming, Dave?" And Henry's attention instantly was riveted. Before David could reply, he had asked sharply:

"Book? You writing a book, Dave?"

David smiled faintly, nodding. "Why, I've been working on one," he confessed.

"I didn't know that," Henry protested, half bewildered. And Tom said doubtfully:

"That so, David? You hadn't told anyone? Ought to know enough to keep my mouth shut by now."

"It's all right," David said frankly. "I haven't talked about it, that's all. There's darned little to talk about, anyway."

"I tried to write a book once," Tom confessed. "But I never had the time."

"It takes time, all right," David agreed. "Goes ahead mighty slowly."

"What's it about?" Henry asked. "Is it a novel?"

"Well," Pell told them. "Yes. Oh, it's not much. I'm just trying to write about the things I see; the life in the city here. And of course a story, too." He fired a little. "You know, there's a lot going on nowadays, Henry. Changing, moving on. I'd like to catch the change on paper if I could."

"You're doing it," Tom declared. "What I've read of it."

"Can I read it sometime?" Henry begged. "I'd like to, mightily, Dave."

"Why yes," David agreed, pleased in spite of himself. "Yes, Henry. If you want. I'd be glad to have you."

"You're on the right track, Dave," Pope said thoughtfully. "There's no future for a man in the newspaper business. Nothing but a lot of work, and a sanitarium when your nerves play out. Late hours, long hours, dull scratching at things. But a writer is always a writer. If a man can write, he's free; he can get out, away from the paper when he wants. A free man."

Pell said gravely: "You're too hard on the game, Tom. Too hard on yourself."

Pope shook his head. "I'm past having illusions, Dave," he retorted. "Oh, I used to have them. Used to think maybe some day I'd be able to swing big things. I set out, deliberately, to write politics. Set out to know politics. Thought

maybe the day would come when I could kill a man or make him, by my stuff. Thought maybe I could get people to think straight, see things the way they ought to. I had a notion that the people were apt to choose the right way if they knew the facts in the case; choose the right man. It doesn't always work, Dave."

"Nothing always works," Pell reminded him.

"Doesn't even work half of the time," Tom insisted. "No sir, I've been at it forty years or so; and the longer I go the emptier it seems."

Henry, listening, found his heart torn; he cried beseechingly. "But Tom, there's not a writer in New England people read as they do you."

Pope shook his head. "I'm just a clown," he retorted. "I amuse them; they get a chuckle out of my stuff. But if I try to express an opinion they don't listen. All they want of me is to have their ribs tickled. All they want in a newspaper is —gossip, and jokes, and thrills. Dave's right. Ten years from now, he'll be safely out of it." He looked at Henry thoughtfully. "You'll stick to it, Henry," he predicted. "You're reliable; you'll not get fired. You'll be on the *Tribune* writing bicycle news forty years from now."

"No sir," said Henry stoutly. "No sir, I'm going to do more than that, Tom. You wait and see."

And David broke in, with a chuckle. "There won't be any bicycles in forty years," he suggested. "Something else will come along. That's one thing sure; that times will change."

"And besides," Henry declared, "more people are interested in bicycles right now than in anything else there is. There were twelve thousand people on wheels in the parade last August, Tom."

Tom chuckled. "Eh, yes," he agreed. "So I read in the paper, Henry my son."

When by and by they took their leave, both Henry and David were inclined to silence; and Henry's thoughts were racing, considering what Pope had said. David perceived this, must have seen the concern in the other's eyes, for as they parted he spoke reassuringly.

"You don't want to worry about what Tom said, Henry," he advised. "He's sick, and low in his mind."

Henry nodded bravely. "And besides," he declared, "I guess having twelve thousand people in a bicycle parade is as big a thing as any newspaper has done around here for a while."

He clung to this thought as he went his homeward way. Clung to it even more stoutly when on Wednesday of that

week word came to the office that Tom Pope had been found dead in his chair, struck forever silent, his disappointments done.

2

The discovery that David was engaged in writing a novel effected between him and Henry a swift revival of the old friendship. Their intimacy, based on Pell's kindliness and Henry's respect and esteem, had during the first years after Henry's marriage somewhat languished. His interests were absorbed at home; Shirley first, and then the babies tended to overshadow everything else; his estate as a householder, a citizen and a man of family were of more weight in his thoughts than was his profession.

But by small degrees this absorption had sunk more deeply into his consciousness, rooted itself in the soil of his being; it continued there to grow and extend its sovereignty, but it did not so much occupy the surface of his life. In any issue between Shirley and the paper, Shirley must have won; but so long as there was no issue, his attention began to turn back to his work in the world, to the business he had to do. His family and his home became matters of fact, always much the same, always forming the secure background of his life; but his work abroad was forever changing, forever new, inviting him on and absorbing his efforts day by day.

If he had not married, had continued his association with David Pell, his own development must have been broader and more rapid; as the fact was, it had been more or less in abeyance during these first three or four years of his marriage. David, who at first came often to the house, came less often when it became apparent that if his advent were expected, Mary Day would also be there. He and Henry never discussed the matter; but Henry was sufficiently observant to understand. So he and David saw each other, for long intervals, only in the office or about their work; and since their absorption was in different directions, their paths even there did not often cross.

But that David was writing a novel struck upon Henry's imagination with increasing force and interest. Hitherto the business of writing had been remote, romantic, strange and full of mystery; his own project in that direction had done no more than lead him into a line of reading which had given him tremendous pleasure. Now he was full of curiosity as to David's book; and at the first occasion he made an opportu-

nity to dine with David, spend an evening at his room. And, somewhat diffidently, Henry confessed to his friend his own ambition.

"I haven't begun it yet," he explained. "But I've done a lot of reading, and thinking, and I'm going to, right away."

"Good," David approved. He added, with a controlled enthusiasm: "You'll enjoy it, Henry. May never get anywhere; but you'll have fun out of it. Get your pleasure as you go along, and let the end go hang. What's it about?"

"The name of it is 'I Speak of Africa,'" Henry told him. "And it's going to be about Africa, and a man like Stanley."

David smiled faintly. "You've never been in Africa," he suggested.

"I know it," Henry agreed. "I mean to go, some time. Probably I'll have to go, before I can finish my book. But I've read a lot about it, Dave, and studied. And I can start, anyway."

Pell shook his head thoughtfully. "Why not stick closer to home," he urged. "Choose something you already know about. Save a lot of work for one thing, digging up your local color." He smiled, and then continued more soberly: "But seriously, you don't have to look so far afield for materials, Henry. There's a lot going on, right under your eyes. All the time. There never was a time when so many big things were happening."

"Tom Pope didn't think so," Henry reminded him. "You remember what he said."

David smiled. "There never was a more romantic figure in American politics than Bryan. If you want romance."

"I don't know anything about politics," Henry confessed. "I couldn't write that kind of a book. I don't want to. Politics is just a row, calling names, squabbling."

"There are things worth watching, underneath," Pell assured him gravely. "But never mind that. There's romance in Cuba, and adventure. We'll be at war there, inside two years, Henry."

"McKinley won't let us," Henry urged. "He'll do everything he can to keep out. If he gets in in time."

Pell shook his head. "Spain despises this country," he argued. "They'll go on till they provoke a fight, sooner or later. And we'll whip them, and that's going to make this country a full grown figure in the eyes of the world, Henry. We're just coming to manhood, you might say. Just about to acquire a vote." He added thoughtfully: "That's the thing I'm trying to paint, trying to tell about. Give some picture of

the sort of nation we are, in the moment before we—step into our place in the world."

They were dining in a restaurant below Beacon Hill; had not yet gone to Pell's rooms, where his manuscript was. "I want to read it tonight," Henry commented.

"It's worth writing," David repeated. "But I probably can't do it."

"I'll bet you can," said Henry loyally.

Pell smiled. "Ten years from now this will be a mighty different country to live in, Henry," he continued. "There'll be horseless carriages the way there are bicycles today. A man out in Chicopee made one that would run, two or three years ago. I've seen it go, Henry. He's making them and selling them now."

"I know," Henry agreed. "But they're just for the rich people. And it takes an engineer to run one of them. And they bump all to pieces when you try to go fast."

"There'll be different roads built," David insisted. "And that one thing alone is going to make a lot of difference in this country. You and I are seeing a lot of things worth seeing, Henry. A lot of things worth writing about. Do you keep a diary?"

"I used to," Henry confessed. "Peter Hendricks got me to start one, when I first came on the *Tribune*."

"It's a good thing to do," David urged. "Just for the fun of reading it over afterward. I've done it for quite a while." He added: "If a newspaper man kept a first rate diary of the things he sees nowadays, it would make a book in ten years. Would read like ancient history to lots of people then. This century is going to see the last of a lot of things, Henry."

Henry found himself that evening more and more interested; he read David's manuscript eagerly, breaking off now and then to comment or question. "But there's not much of a story in it," he protested at last. "It's just about the things we see every day. I like a story in a book when I read it."

"This isn't finished," David conceded. "Maybe you're right. I want to get down on paper a picture of life first, Henry. Then if I have to I can put in more of a story." He colored faintly. "I want to take it to Mr. Howells some time, and ask him to read it. Have you read his books, Henry?"

Henry shook his head. "No."

"Read 'Silas Lapham,' " David advised. "That's about Boston, the way it was when you were born. You'll find it hasn't changed so greatly; not till the last few years. But it's changing faster all the time. I want to catch that change . . . Not

just let it slip by and become an accomplished thing, without anyone's noticing."

Henry asked uncomfortably: "Did you ever see Mr. Howells?"

"No," Pell confessed. "But I know some people who know him. They say he's mighty willing to—advise a beginner. A fine man."

Henry considered this; and he found himself looking about David's room with a little more attention. "You've got a lot of books," he said vaguely. "You must buy them all the time."

"My father had a good library," Pell explained.

"Is he dead?" Henry asked. It occurred to him that he knew very little about David.

"Yes," David told him. "Yes, I haven't any family." He added mildly: "So I've a lot of time with nothing to do but read. Of course, I know a few people; see something of them."

Henry considered this; felt rather than discovered between David and himself an intangible difference, hard to define. This had never been apparent to him before. He remembered, abruptly, Pell's first day in the *Tribune* office; remembered him as a thin young man, silent, vaguely helpless. Henry in his own greater sophistication had been able to guide and advise him, had felt a personal satisfaction in the fact that David succeeded in his work. Now he realized for the first time that the other had outstripped himself; and looking backward in swift self-appraisal, he saw that this had happened long ago. Just now for instance, since Tom Pope's death, Pell was quite obviously destined to cover the State House and write politics permanently; and Henry knew this to be an assignment definitely beyond his own powers. He asked curiously:

"Did you go to college, Dave?"

"I had two years at Amherst," Pell explained. "Before I got sick." He hesitated. "I thought of trying to go back and finish there; but I had a living to make, by that time."

"I didn't go to college," Henry confessed, and felt, vaguely, that this fact justified his own inadequacy; felt that it explained the difference between himself and Pell. "I mean to send my children, though," he added gravely.

David smiled in a friendly fashion. "Of course you will," he agreed.

Henry went home that night filled with a new and glowing respect for Pell; for his powers and his opinions. Filled too with this almost forgotten intent toward college for his boy.

He was also mistily conscious that between him and David a deep division lay. "He probably knows people on the Hill," he thought. "Has dinner with them and everything." There was no envy in him; yet he had to remind himself defensively that there was nothing inherently debasing in the profession of a blacksmith, nor in that of a reporter.

"And I can be a good newspaper man," he told himself. "Maybe an editor some day."

Before he got home to Shirley he had fought down the hurt in his heart; he talked long to her that night of the things he meant to do. And Shirley, smiling sleepily in the darkness, let him hold tight her hand.

VI

But Henry's high resolves were perforce thrust in the background by the pressure of life; by the swift succeeding days. During the ensuing year Shirley was not so well; she was to have a third baby in November. At the same time her mother began to fail in health, suffering at times an extremity of pain; and Doctor Snow gave his full confidence only to Henry. Henry, bearing alone the knowledge of the hopelessness of Mrs. Prior's condition, had nevertheless to reassure Shirley and her father too; and he did this to the measure of his powers, and learned to lie with a valorous smile, and would not let himself think of the accusation that must swell in Shirley's eyes when she knew the bitter truth at last.

He discovered his children; found that Dan was no longer a baby. And he began the effort to teach the little boy his alphabet, teach him to recognize simple printed words. "I want him to learn to read," he told Shirley. "Just as quick as he can. David Pell says reading is the best way to broaden a man. I want Dan to be a broad man."

Shirley, smiling, said fondly: "He has broad little shoulders now, Henry." And Henry, full of pride, exclaimed:

"You bet he has. Say, he's as hard as nails, Shirley. He's mighty strong, already. I'll bet he's going to be a big man."

"I sha'n't mind how big he is," Shirley assured him. Found herself leaning toward Henry, coveting the reassurance of

his arm about her waist. "He'll need me so much as he grows up, won't he, Henry?"

"Sure will," Henry exclaimed. "I'll bet you and he'll be regular sweethearts. I'll bet you'll forget all about me when he's old enough to beau you around."

"I will be here with you all, won't I," she whispered; and he, feeling the cold finger of fear upon his heart, nevertheless cried stoutly:

"Course you will, Honey. What do you go talking like that for?"

"Well, when you tell me I will, I know I will," she replied. "So I like to hear you tell me so."

In the spring of that year Henry shaved his cheeks again, and thereafter went clean shaven. Sometimes, furtively, borrowing Shirley's hand mirror to supplement that above his dresser, he studied his profile, comparing it with that of the men Gibson drew. The artist had captured the public imagination; and Mary discovered in this fact a small source of revenue which she turned to some account, acquiring a pyrography outfit with which she ornamented cushion covers, wall hangings of leather, and the tops of wooden work boxes. Her favorite design was the Gibson drawing, "The Eternal Question"; the profile of a girl whose heavy hair curled in the form of an interrogation point.

Henry was no longer so much concerned about Mary. She was indispensable to Shirley, carrying at such times as this the whole burden of housework, refusing to let Shirley stir her hand. The children adored her; and she found in their affection a comfort never failing. She had heard nothing more of Harry Coster; Henry hoped she never would. Mary and George Nye had settled down to a restrained friendship again, seeing each other occasionally at the house or in the city; and once or twice George invited Mary to go on small excursions with him, upon a Sunday when Henry could be at home to take care of the children and ease Shirley's hands. Mary came to Henry for advice upon the question of accepting these invitations; and her wistfulness was to his eyes so apparent that he stifled his misgivings, said stoutly:

"Sure, Mary. Go ahead and have a good time."

Mary more and more deferred to him; he had almost forgotten that she was once in a position of authority above him, an ogre whom he both hated and feared. Unconsciously he condescended to her now; and at his own suggestion he made her a small allowance. She protested at this, said she had everything she needed; but he insisted heartily enough.

"You ought to have some money of your own," he told her. "And you're worth a lot to Shirley and me. We couldn't get along without you, Mary."

He had a swelling sense of generosity from this episode; tried to argue it down and to remind himself how much Mary had done for him. "But just the same," he thought, "a lot of men wouldn't give her anything."

His work in the office Henry found engrossing. He met, day by day, new people; made new contacts. And he went on century runs with one or another cycle club, widening his acquaintance with the country round about. The bicycle had been christened, by someone, the "fin de siècle steed," and Henry adopted the phrase and used it so constantly he made it his own. The word "siècle" interested him; he wondered if there was not a kinship between it and "cycle"; and he thought of learning to read French and acquired a dictionary and a French imprint of "The Three Musketeers" and pored over it painstakingly, comparing his translation with the accepted one. But the stirring tale made him impatient of the slow pace of his translation; he laid it aside to reread the novel, and did not take up the task again.

He thrilled to the increasing importance of the bicyle; investigated the report that their price was coming down and wrote his opinion that this was improbable; and he liked to point out that the bicycle vote was now a factor to be reckoned with by politicians. "The cycle is an immense force in modern civilization, alike in politics and in morals," he declared in the *Tribune*. "The cycle vote is considered by politicians; the church is adapting itself to new conditions; the theatrical world is fighting it, seeing in it a threat against their business. It is no longer possible to call it a fad. It has come to stay."

He collected interviews on the question of traffic control, not only from cyclists but from those who clung to carriages; and he urged that the legal speed limit of ten miles an hour on highways should be raised to give cyclists more latitude.

The South Station was under construction; and Henry wrote: "Just as the older method of transportation has consolidated itself, so will the cycle in time assume a recognized place in civilization. There will be cycle terminals. The cycle will no longer be a mere instrument of pleasure, but a general utility, if not a necessity too."

He disapproved the practice of using street cars as pace makers. "To ride behind a car is to court accident," he wrote. "The flange of the rail may throw the rider against the car."

And he warned drivers of carriages not to crowd cyclists toward the curb. "The pedal may strike upon the curb and throw the rider, dangerously," he pointed out.

He himself enjoyed the cycle tours. When one of these expeditions took him into the countryside, he had a keen pleasure in the green of the fields and the shaded depths of the wooded lands; and he advised cyclists to take the trouble now and then to leave their wheels and walk up a hill aside from the road in order to study the view from the top.

"There is too much emphasis on the distance travelled," he wrote. "More pleasure may be had by riding shorter distances and pausing more often to enjoy the out of doors."

On one of his trips he found himself in Framingham; and it occurred to him to take time to look up Sam Russell. His recollection of the locality was vague; it seemed to him now that there were more houses than there had used to be, less open country. But when he topped at last the hill above the Russell farm and saw the valley all outspread before him, his breath caught a little; and he remembered the impression that he had had here when he first came to visit Sam. "Ten years or so ago," he thought, as his wheel plunged down the hill.

He found Sam's father, and discovered him an old man, and was vaguely disturbed by this discovery. But Mr. Russell directed him to Sam's farm, half a mile farther on. "I won't last much longer," he told Henry. "Sam'll have both places, then."

Henry asked after Mrs. Russell; learned she had been dead two years. He was glad to go on, to turn into the farmyard before Sam's house; and he sprang from his machine and strode toward the door, full of eagerness at the thought of seeing Sam again. A woman came to open to him; he thought she looked tired, and found her unattractive. There was a baby in her ams; and she told Henry that Sam was in the lower field, pointed out to him the way. He found Sam grubbing shoots there, near the brook where they had fished for trout ten years before.

Sam made Henry instantly uncomfortable. His tone was jocular and friendly; and he gripped Henry's hand wringingly. But his eyes were older and more sober; and Henry remembered that Sam had been a boy inclined to laughter. After the first greeting they stood uncertain what to say.

"I was out this way," Henry exclaimed. "And I thought I'd hunt you up."

"Did you come by the house?" Sam asked; and Henry nodded.

"I guess I saw Mrs. Russell," he hazarded.

"She's busy with the young ones," Sam explained. There were, he added, two of them now, and another coming this winter.

"We had a boy that died," Sam told him; and he added: "Daisy ain't so well. There's a pile of work on a farm."

They talked together for ten minutes or so, with long and longer pauses; and then Henry said he must move on. Sam seemed vaguely glad to have him go, he thought; and afterward, Henry was conscious of a sense of loss; he tried to put it into words. "Sam's just the same as he always was," he told himself stubbornly. "Only he's had to work pretty hard. And lived in the country all the time."

But this did not convince him. He thought, though he would not admit this even to himself, that Sam had retrograded; sunk into the soil. "Stood still," he decided. "He's the same as he always was. And I've gone ahead, seen things, seen more of the world."

Yet clung stubbornly to an ancient phrase. "Just the same, he's the oldest friend I've got," he told himself, over and over. "I wish we would see each other more. I wish he'd come back in town."

2

He became more and more conscious of the changes in himself, after this interview with Sam. When Sullivan fought Kilrain he had seen in the battle an epic combat, an immortal fray. But now, when Corbett—who had conquered Sullivan—fell in his turn before Fitzsimmons, Henry was little interested. Even the fact that the Kinetoscope was used to make moving pictures of the fight scarce stirred his imagination.

But when toward the end of June the papers were suddenly filled with word of the discovery of gold in the Klondike, Henry was instantly afire. He confided to David Pell that if he were not married, he would go.

"Think of picking gold right out of the ground," he cried. "Just picking it up everywhere."

David smiled. "There won't be enough gold dug in the Klondike to pay for the wasted labor, and the lives," he predicted; and Henry fell resentfully silent. Yet within himself his

enthusiasm flamed; he had for the first time a sense that marriage had hindered him, that it kept him now from wealth and fortune. One day in September he cut from the *Tribune* an advertisement of a company being formed to search out gold; and he later showed it to Clem Prior, read aloud the glowing phrases.

" 'Seven million dollars in San Francisco up to date,' " he exclaimed. " 'There will be twenty-five million by fall.' "

And he added eagerly: "You can invest money in the company if you want to. They've sent an engineer to the Klondike and he's going to build a machine to get the gold without using water. It does ten men's work, and it will work every day in the year. Doesn't have to have water at all. You can see what that will mean. And the shares are only a dollar each. They've got jars of gold in the office. I've seen them."

Clem shook his head. "You'd never get a cent," he said soberly. "Don't let them fool you, son. The only way to make money is to earn it and save it. You're doing right well the way you are."

Henry could not convince Clem, but he himself, furtively, bought twenty-five shares and treasured the certificates, looking forward to a gilded affluence in the time to come. Shirley found the shares in his dresser and rated him for his folly; but his enthusiasm overbore her in the end, and she smiled and was still.

He took her that summer on the trolley to the newly opened bath houses at Crescent Beach in Revere. She sat on the sands while Henry went into the water. He had almost forgotten how to swim; decided to do more of it. "So I can teach Dan," he told Shirley, and she approved with her wise smile.

On the homeward journey they sat next to an old man, and Henry fell into talk with him, and saw a chance to make a story out of him.

"I saw the first electric cars come in, in '89," the old man said. "I like to ride on them. Ride every day, around different places, to see the country. I'd never been twenty miles from home before; and now I go that far every day it's fine."

He had brought his lunch in a basket; had field glasses slung against his side.

"All these electric railways will be one company by and by," he prophesied. "Or the people will own them and hire men to run them."

And he saw even further. "Ten years from now there'll be horseless carriages everywhere, running on rubber tires,"

he predicted. "When they get rubber tired wheels, and get rid of great tramping horses, they won't wear out the roads, and the roads will be perfect. And they'll last forever, then."

Henry wrote a story about him for the *Tribune* next day; and it struck Ben Harris' fancy. He gave Henry a raise in pay. Henry had thought the old man half mad; he had written the story as a matter of amusement. Somewhat to his surprise, Ben seemed to take it seriously; to discover in the old man a seer.

The baby came on the fourth of November; proved to be a girl. They named it Mary; and Mary Beeker held the small bundle in her arms, head bowed above it, eyes swimming in delight that the child would bear her name.

Shirley was very ill.

3

The new baby was from the first fortnight of her life a joy and a delight. She was born, astonishingly, with hair; her hair was brown and inclined to curl; and it assumed almost at once something like luxuriance, waned a little, and then took heart and strength again. Dan had been a stolid child, grave and sober, surveying life with dignified and appraising eyes; Cynthia, the second baby, was inclined to mischief always, had a way of doing with deliberation those things she was meant not to do, and then impishly making her peace with the world. But this baby was of a different mold; she was inclined to laughter, yet also to tenderness; she liked being held and cuddled and made much of; she had a quick, toothless smile, oily and bland, for any one who approached her. Was, in short, and almost from the first, supremely lovable; and Henry found in her a great flood of joy and delight.

She was able to comfort him at a time when he needed staying and comforting; for Shirley was long about the business of recovery. She was forced to keep her bed almost two months' time, and then only the long continued open weather, almost free from snow, lured her to her feet and out of doors. Mrs. Prior was by this time bed-ridden; so upon Mary fell the whole burden of the work of the household. Clem was beginning to grow old, acquiring a stolidness and a composure that was impervious to the movements of the people about him. and young Mat, abandoning the store, had gone to work in Chicopee. So Henry had to be all things to Shirley and her mother; had to bring a brave face to Shirley's bedside, and

a quick tongue to cheer her; had to sit sometimes with Mrs. Prior and appease her weary pain.

The baby was his strength and solace in these times. The neighbors were kind, and the church folk with whom they had contact; and Mary Day, married and become Mary Gallop now, came often to the house and took the children for a day, or for an afternoon, when it would ease things at home. Mary had no children. Will Gallop, her husband, worked in his father's hardware store; he was a puzzled little man, wearing always an air of faint bewilderment as though Mary's swift, gay life ran too fast for him. Henry guessed, sometimes, that Mary wanted children; and he used to tell her that the new baby was named as much after her as after his own sister.

"I don't care what her name is," she would retort. "I just love her to pieces." And bury her face in the baby's soft neck while it screamed with ecstatic delight.

Will Gallop sometimes came to the house on Sunday, with his wife; and he would sit with Henry, saying little, speaking when he was spoken to. A load of a man.

Henry's circle of friends was steadily widening. The Malgraves were neighbors. Cy Malgrave was an attorney, a bent little man, his back vaguely deformed, who wore an habitual smile and moved in some prosperity. He was forever offering his services; and Mrs. Malgrave was apt to run in at all hours to ask what she could do.

"But when you ask her to do something, she can't quite manage it just then," Shirley one night remarked to Henry.

Fred Cook was a new man on the *Tribune* who lived not far away, and Henry liked him; an unassuming man, who had lived arduously, in many cities. Molly Cook was a dark, vivacious, young woman. They had one child, a little girl somewhat sickly, about four years old. Fred and Henry often came home on the same train.

And there were others, shadowy figures, never bulking large in Henry's life. Yet from each one he sometimes got companionship. He needed these distracting contacts; for always at home there was the pressure of Shirley's illness, and her concern about her mother, and Clem Prior's resigned acceptance of the situation. Henry was at times put to it for a diversion to distract his weary thoughts. He might have set to work upon his novel, but had no heart for it; the days pressed too heavily upon him, he could find no time. David's novel was nearly done, undergoing this winter what David expected would be its last revision before being submitted to a

publisher. Henry understood that David rather dreaded this test, now imminent and inescapable. Yet had high hopes too. . . .

Early in February the open winter ended in a terrific blizzard, a wind at fifty miles an hour, and better than a foot of snow, which at first melted as it fell, and then stiffened in the grip of dropping temperatures. Wires went down, the railroads were crippled; the city was locked fast, and for a day or two there was little movement. Henry thought despairingly that he would be shut in with his worries now. He seized, a little later, with an amused interest upon the discussion of the ordinance passed by the aldermen directing that ladies must remove their hats in the theatre, and he used to read aloud to Shirley the violent protests from women readers of the *Tribune*, evoked by this innovation.

"It won't bother me," Shirley said uncomplainingly. "We never go to the theatre."

"By George, we will go," Henry declared. "We'll start and go as soon as the weather gets better. That's what you need, Shirley. I'll get David to tell us a good play."

The intention was not realized till some time in May when they saw "Charley's Aunt" at the Castle Square; and Henry laughed over his memories of that for days. It seemed to hearten Shirley, too; and he told David Pell that they wanted to go again. David nodded approvingly.

"There are things worth seeing in the theatre nowadays," he agreed. "Maude Adams will come here next fall, I expect. You ought to see her. . . ."

Henry followed the news from the Klondike, read avidly what word came from the far north. At least once a week the *Tribune* had an illustrated dispatch from the coast, reciting the bulletins that trickled out of the gold camps. He revelled in the adventurous tales, learned by proxy all the intricacies of the search for gold, and the method of mining and washing it; he knew what outfit a man required to venture into the north, and how much expense was involved; and he tried to calculate, mathematically, the chances of success in the field, and longed to try his own fortunes there.

This great preoccupation of the times had indirectly a result that came home to Henry. Harry Coster came back to town, sought out Mary, invited himself to dinner. There seemed to be no shame in the man.

"I've been disappointed," he said frankly. "We had a good thing, but the big fellows took it away from us. We hadn't the capital to protect ourselves, Henry. A bunch of wolves."

He became eloquent on this text. Henry, watching him, thought Coster had changed surprisingly little. He was as big, as assured, as eloquent as ever; his cheek as pink, his garments as excellent.

"I've lost a lot of money for you folks," Coster conceded. "But if the world hadn't been full of thieves, we'd all be millionaires today. Yes sir, millionaires."

Henry at first thought Coster was inured against what they might think of him. But after dinner, when he and Harry were left alone, the big man drew him aside, said furtively:

"It's been tough on Mary, hasn't it. I didn't let her know. Expected to have good news for her all the time."

"You can make it up to her," Henry urged.

Coster shook his head. "No, she don't want anything to do with me. No, I'll go along, get out of the way. She don't want to talk to me at all."

"You're going away again?" Henry asked. He was curiously relieved; had been dreading the possibility that Coster had come to claim Mary as his own once more. He and Shirley could hardly do without her, without her ready and efficient hand.

"That's what I came back for," Coster explained. "Another man and I, we're going to the Klondike this summer. He's been up there, knows the country; and he's a scientist. We're going to make your fortunes for you, Henry. I'm going to come back with pockets full of gold, and dump it in Mary's lap, and then I can ask her to take me back. Yes sir. That's Harry Coster. I'm going to repay her first, and then she can forgive me."

Henry asked doubtfully: "When are you going?"

"Just raising capital now," Coster explained. "That's why I came back where I was known, where people trusted me. Wanted to give you folks a chance to get in on it, see."

Henry smiled faintly, shook his head. "I've already put twenty-five dollars in a company," he said. "And—I've had pretty heavy expenses. Can't spare any more, Harry."

Coster became eloquent; and by and by Shirley and Mary came back and he turned his batteries of words upon them. But it was Mary herself who silenced him. She said at last, stern yet sorrowful:

"We've no more to give you, Harry. And if Henry had any money, I'd not let him give it to you. You're an irresponsible man."

"I tell you I'm going to pay you," Coster urged, in a hurt tone. "That's all the gratitude I get. From my wife, too."

Yet was somewhat subdued; and a little later, when Clem Prior stopped for a moment to ask Henry to go and see Mrs. Prior, Coster went with them. When Henry went up to Mrs. Prior's room, Harry and Clem stayed below; and Harry was gone before Henry came down. Henry was relieved to be rid of him, but a day or two later, Clem confided to Henry that he had loaned Coster six hundred dollars. "He has a good proposition," he said defensively.

Henry was distressed. "Oh, that's too bad," he commented. "You know what sort he is. Or you ought to. And you advised me not to put any money into Klondike schemes."

"Well," Clem argued. "It looks as though there was something in it up there, now. I kind of wanted to have a share in it."

"It'll be the way it was with the transformer," Henry predicted. But Clem shook his head.

"No, it's a man to man proposition up there. And Coster is a big, strong man."

Henry felt, vaguely, that this sounded like a quotation of Coster's words; but there was nothing to be done in the matter. Nothing except keep it from Shirley and from Mrs. Prior. He thought Clem had been lucky to escape so lightly, counted the six hundred dollars as gone.

Coster's appearance and disappearance had saddened Mary; she seemed, he thought, older in the days that followed. And she refused to let George Nye come to dinner one Sunday when he asked permission. She must have begun to hope, Henry thought, that Coster was dead.

4

The destruction of the *Maine* in February came at a time when Shirley was ill; it scarce moved Henry at all. Something of the kind, he thought, had long been inevitable, and he was under no illusions during the delay that followed, never doubted Spanish agency in the catastrophe. When, two months later, war was declared, he had a moment's quickening of the pulses, a longing to offer himself to go out into the turbulence and glory that was waiting. But—he could not go; too many lives hung upon his own. He never voiced his longing, stifled it within himself; not even Shirley ever knew. Henry was learning the necessity of silence; learning that there is no heavier burden than a secret that cannot be shared.

But as the days passed, in the news from Cuba he found

distraction from the ills at home. Shirley was half sick, all that spring and summer; and Henry himself was dazed with worry and concern. His salary was taxed to meet the demands upon it; he even for a while suspended, with Clem's permission, payments on the house. To forget these worries, he read all the papers, hour by hour, poring over them. Gazed with awe and worship upon the glory of Admiral Dewey; felt his pulse throb at the name of Roosevelt and resented Pat Dryden's dispatches from Washington about this man. Pat wrote that Roosevelt would resign as assistant secretary of the navy, would go to Cuba, would seek a place on the staff of General Lee. The President was opposed to his going, Dryden said, and added:

> "He has been invaluable in the preparations for hostilities; and he has been all but commanded to stay where he is. He is a man of forty and a father; his projected course is Quixotic and indefensible."

Henry dissented from this opinion with the utmost violence; thought of writing Pat to tell him so. But the creation of the Rough Riders somewhat appeased his wrath; and Dewey and the *Oregon* and Hobson gave him other things to wonder at. David Pell and Marty Bull had been sent to Florida; David saw, from a dispatch boat, the destruction of Cervera's squadron. Henry read his stories with a great longing, yet without the ugliness of envy.

But his work with the cycle clubs suffered that summer; it was half-hearted and ineffectual, and he felt the utmost scorn for those who in a timorous panic, alarmed at the possibility that the Spanish fleet might raid the coast, fled the city or sent their securities away.

In September he took Shirley to see the electrical display by the searchlights of the fleet assembled in Boston Harbor. Jammed in the crowd on the long, double-decked pier at North End Park they watched the red and blue signal lights, the hissing rockets, the sweeping arms of the searchlights for two long, thrilling hours. He was doing everything possible at this time to distract Shirley; she knew, now, that her mother was dying, and she was herself far from well. They saw "Way Down East" at Tremont Temple; and they saw Maude Adams, fresh from her three hundred performances in New York. He insisted on Shirley's getting new clothes; humorously supervised the sewing she and Mary did, laughed at their attempts to achieve a wasp waist, brought home

sketches from the art department in the *Tribune* showing the wide decolleté, the bare arms and long gloves which were become fashionable. He threatened to get himself one of the loose tan sack coats reaching to the hips which were affected by men; and Shirley was wooed to laughter at the suggestion, and told him he would look like a little boy. Henry, who never outgrew his regret at the slightness of his own stature, hid his hurt at her words.

Because Shirley must not be made more unhappy now.

They saw the Ninth Regiment come home; and David returned, and spent a Sunday at the house to tell them all the wonders he had seen. Henry found David as enthusiastic about Roosevelt as he himself had been; and the two exulted together when the hero was nominated for Governor of New York, and David said soberly:

"He's going to be president some day, Henry. He's working toward it all the time."

Henry disagreed with this. "Of course, he'll take it if it's offered to him," he confessed. "But he's just a great man, Dave, doing what he thinks is the right thing to do."

"He's a great man," Pell agreed, smilingly. "But he's a politician, too. They tried to keep him out of the war. They didn't want a man already in politics to be a hero. But he would go, and he took care to get publicity for all he did. They can't stop him now."

"Bryan went too," Henry remembered.

"Bryan will be a candidate again," Pell agreed. "And so will McKinley. But Roosevelt will wait his time. He's where he wants to be, now; he'll stay there till the hour strikes for him. He'll make his reputation in New York; but McKinley will be President again."

The exposure of the Beef Trust appealed to Henry as a newspaper exploit fit to be compared with the great deeds of old; he wished Tom Pope might have lived to see it. But by degrees the fever of the war passed, and life settled down into routine once more. It was almost a relief, when just before Christmas Mrs. Prior died. The blow, he saw, was not so fearful to Shirley as the waiting had been; when he would have comforted her, she said pitifully:

"It's all right, Henry. I couldn't bear to have her suffer so long. That was all."

And he had the wit to be silent and wait for the passing days to heal the wound.

They had a Christmas tree for the children; and Clem Prior sat at one side, watching, puffing his straight-stemmed pipe,

a still old man. He had received his wife's death without outcry or protestation; yet it seemed to Henry that the blow, borne thus silently, had been the keener. He thought Clem was not so like a pink and white baby, full of calm sap and life; there was something dusty about him, a light dust seemed to lie upon his very cheek. Shirley, too, must have seen, for she said to Henry wistfully:

"Father isn't the same, is he?"

Henry sought to reassure her. "Why, he's fine!" he urged. "A little quiet, that's all. He'll be better by and by."

Nevertheless he thought to himself: "I've got him to look out for now.

5

Young Mat Prior had come home at the time of his mother's death; and he was still there on Christmas Day. He came to Henry's house with his father, and he managed an ebullient gaiety which cajoled Henry's children into the full measure of the happiness that was their due. The death of Mrs. Prior meant nothing to them; she had been ill for long; they had never known her otherwise, had never seen her—so far as their short memories ran—except in bed. The fact that her bed was empty now was not impressive. But the faint and helpless sorrow of Shirley must have saddened them had it not been for Mat. Mat, and Henry under the younger man's heartening influence, managed to make the day a festival.

Henry was interested in Mat; watched the young man attentively. He had moments of remembering the boy Mat had been; his surprisingly wide blue eyes, his coarse, stiff hair, his zealous interest in bicycles and everything mechanical. At the time of Henry's marriage, Mat had been at an age inclined to scorn such matters; since then, refusing to absorb himself in formal education, he had gone to work, and Henry scarce had seen him. He found Mat now a lively young man with an alert intelligence, and full of a fever for the future, for the life before him. They had, after Christmas, more than one talk together.

Mat had devoted himself to the rising star of the automobile; he said to Henry earnestly:

"You'd better begin to study them, Henry. Five years from now there won't be a line of bicycle news in the paper, but a man that knows automobiles will have things all his own way."

Henry said, flushing faintly: "Oh, I don't expect to write

bicycle stuff all my life. But I'm learning a lot from it, Mat; learning what people want to read. Learning the game."

Mat looked at him curiously. "What do you aim to do, Henry?" he asked. "Stick to the *Tribune* all your life?"

"I want to get into the executive end, get to be an editor," Henry confessed.

Mat was silent for a moment; he asked at last, frankly: "Think you can?"

"Yes," Henry assured him. "I know I can."

The younger man made a quick gesture. "All right. Only you're getting pretty old. If you're ever going to make a change, now's the time. And if you wanted to, I could get you a job."

Henry laughed. "Making horseless carriages?"

"There'll be close to a thousand of them built in this country next year," Mat assured him. He leaned forward earnestly. "Do you realize they're making about the best one in the country right now, within six miles of this house? A steamer. I've been over there."

"They'll blow you up," Henry predicted.

"I'll risk it," Mat assured him. "I've been working in the factory in Chicopee; but now mother's dead and father's alone in the house; and if I can get a job here, I'll come back here to work. I think I can, too."

"It'll be nice having you," Henry told him. "I think your father'll like it; and I know Shirley and I will."

"I've been looking around," Mat assented; and he added, after a moment: "Of course, I know people around here." And a moment later, thoughtfully: "You know, I saw Fanny Day this morning. She was just a kid, last time I saw her."

Henry nodded, not particularly interested, though Shirley would have been. He told Shirley that night that Mat was planning to stay at home; but he did not mention Fanny Day to her at all.

There was during the succeeding months something stirring in the world which infected even Henry, usually slow to catch the spirit of the day. This was, many people said, the last year of the old century, the new was about to begin. And the world was full of new things. The war was already half forgotten; only the old stench of the beef scandals, the remote interest in Aguinaldo, and the warmed-over enthusiasm generated by Dewey's prospective return, remained. There were subways in operation; and the merchants of Tremont Street were fighting for the return of surface cars in front of their stores. A section of elevated road was being built. Fitzsimmons and

Jeffries went into training in April. Henry saw, one day, a motor bicycle; was deafened by its roar, and wrote half a column about it for his department. The old rendezvous at the Reservoir was losing popularity in favor of Franklin Park.

"The real up-to-date rider always makes it a point to spend his Sunday afternoons at Franklin Park, where many who are well known in the cycling world are to be found," Henry told his readers.

The Klondike and now the automobile had stirred a fever of stock gambling; speculative schemes obscured the birth of the automobile, but even level heads admitted that the new machine had a great potential future. Motor carriages began to appear in the parkways; and the cycle club rides began to disintegrate. People now preferred to ride in small parties, or by twos and threes. Bicycle prices were coming down; the advertising tone was more and more vociferous. Persons who had never been conscious of science discovered it through their interest in liquid air. The kissing bug appeared daily through the summer, in the newspapers if nowhere else; and Roosevelt's presidential prospects were a matter for editorial discussion. In July an automobile made the journey from New York to San Francisco.

There was a fever for new things in the very air; the world was imptatient to turn the last leaf of the century, open the new ledger; and Henry shared in this universal though intangible emotion. David Pell had shown his novel to a publisher; was now revising it still further. Henry's own novel had been long in abeyance; his mind had been engaged with his work, with his cares at home. But now Mrs. Prior was dead; that long dread was fulfilled, and found less fearful in the reality than in the anticipation. His work no longer engrossed him; the bicycle might still be news but it had ceased to be a religion. And Shirley was at last herself again, her strength returned; their lives moved orderly.

So Henry turned now and then to "I Speak of Africa" once more.

VII

Henry had come, more or less unconsciously, to think of his sister's life as settled into its final channels. During the following spring he was forced to confront the fact that this was not the case. Shirley one day warned him that Mary and George Nye were seeing more and more of each other, and she thought Henry ought to speak to Mary.

Henry was disinclined, at first, to borrow trouble. Shirley was well, and so were the children. Dan was a stout boy, slow and calm and sure, moving philosophically through life; and Cynthia—they were already calling her Cynt as Mrs. Prior had been called—was forever at some business which moved Shirley to a fond exasperation, and Henry himself to delighted laughter. Mary, the baby, in her second year, was becoming steady on her feet, beginning to utter sounds which had about them some suggestion of an ordered and intended speech. Henry refused to see any cloud upon the horizon.

But Shirley was insistent; she spoke of the matter again and again. "Mary was in town today," she told Henry one night. "She bought some gingham, so I know she saw George, and I think she had lunch with him. It's going to start talk by and by."

Henry laughed at her. "Why Shirley, they've known each other twenty years. Naturally, they're friends."

"I certainly don't like Mr. Coster," Shirley confessed. "But she's married to him, and she ought not to let people talk about her."

"Mary's not going to make a fool of herself, at her age," Henry insisted.

"She cried, after she came home today," Shirley told him. "Went to her room, and stayed there almost an hour; and her eyes were red when she came out. And she used to be in love with George Nye. You said so yourself."

"That was years ago," Henry retorted scornfully. "And she's always crying."

"Well I think she still loves him; and I think she's awfully unhappy, Henry."

Henry laughed. "Why, Shirley, she doesn't love anything in the world but baby. She's not thinking about George Nye."

"She does love baby," Shirley agreed softly.

"You're not jealous of her, are you?" Henry said teasingly; and Shirley gravely shook her head.

"No, no, I'm glad for her to be happy, Henry," she told him. "I want her to be happy. She's done so much for us, all these years."

They got in the end no further than this; than Shirley's distressed insistence and Henry's incredulity. But sometime in May, when spring was in full flood across the land, Henry found that Shirley had been right after all. For Mary, who was never vocal, never much given to showing her heart in words, found speech for what she had to say.

The occasion was a Sunday. Clem and Mat had come to Sunday dinner; and afterward Mat hurried away. "I'm going over to see Fanny Day," he told them, in a too casual tone. "I'll probably have supper there."

Henry said jokingly: "Over there quite a lot, aren't you, Mat?" And Mat grinned at him and nodded.

"Yes," he agreed. "Guess I am. Why?"

"Nothing," Shirley intervened, and silenced Henry with a sidelong glance. "Bring Fanny to supper here if you want to."

"I'll see what she says," Mat said noncommittally. " 'By." And took himself away.

They were still at table and he left them sitting there. But a moment after he was gone Mary rose abruptly, started toward the door. Not toward the kitchen, where she and Shirley must be busy with the dishes for a while; but toward the stair. Henry, looking after her, had a quick dismay. He asked: "All right, Mary?"

"Yes," she said, without turning her head. But her voice was choking; and he looked at Shirley and was still. They heard Mary go upstairs; heard her footsteps in her room above their heads; heard the complaint of the springs as she threw herself across her bed. Only Clem, impervious, unconscious of the currents moving about him, paid no heed; he pushed back his chair and produced a match and began to whittle at it.

"Coming out on the porch, Henry?" he asked.

Henry said inattentively: "In a minute, yes." He was watching Shirley, and so soon as they were alone, he spoke to her.

"What's the matter with Mary?"

She said gravely: "She's unhappy, Henry. I've told you. And—seeing Mat go off to Fanny so. . . ."

He tried to protest; but Shirley began to clear the table, and he moved uncertainly toward the veranda. Clem, he saw, was already half asleep, dozing in his chair there; and Henry returned toward the kitchen and found Shirley busy with the dishes and took a towel to dry them. He was reluctant to speak of that which was in his mind; but each knew what the other was thinking, and Shirley said once, explosively:

"Mr. Coster got six thousand dollars from father, too."

"Six thousand?" Henry protested. "Clem told me six hundred."

"I guess he was afraid you'd tell him he was foolish," Shirley commented.

"Good Lord!" Henry muttered. "As much as that!"

And they were silent for a while, and then Mary came downstairs.

Her eyes, Henry saw at once, were still wet with tears; inflamed and weary. She came to Shirley's side and began to work with them, saying no word. Henry gave place to her, drew back and watched her; studied her broad back, her thick and compact shoulders, her heavy hips, the stringy brown of her hair. This body of hers had been so many years devoted to his service, to the service of him and his; there were the marks of her life upon it. Yet he had, suddenly, understanding of her aching, empty heart; had a glimpse of the tragedy of long frustration.

Neither Mary nor Henry were demonstrative; there had scarce been the suggestion of an embrace between them since that day—abruptly and keenly he remembered it—that day his father died, when her broad bosom was so comforting. But presently he crossed to Mary's side, and put his arm across her shoulder, and said in a rough affection:

"What's the matter, Mary? What are you crying for?"

She looked at him, quickly, sidewise; beneath his arm her shoulders were steady and firm and hard. She was scrubbing a roasting pan, scouring at its blackness; and her arms were wet to the elbow. She looked at him only for a moment, then turned her eyes to her work again; and he dropped his hand. But he saw tears run furiously down her cheeks, down her nose. She brushed at her face with her arm, and a greasy smudge appeared upon the bridge of her nose; and Henry saw Shirley going into the pantry. Shirley did not return.

He wanted to run away; yet thought, wearily, that he might as well have this over with. So said heartily: "Come on, Mary. Talk to me. Tell me about it, will you."

She scrubbed stubbornly at the pan; and suddenly he laughed and caught her shoulder and turned her around. Put his arms around her, pressed his cheeks to hers. He felt her shake with a great stifled sob; and his nostrils were full of the smell of greasy dishwater. He thought how many thousands of greasy dishes she had washed in her weary time.

She was wiping her hands on her apron. "Come on," he urged, still holding her. She could not see his face; he need not look on hers. "What's the matter, anyway?"

Her voice, when she spoke, was surprisingly steady. "Henry," she said. "I've been thinking. I'm going to get a divorce from Harry."

His thoughts leaped ahead; he saw headlines in the papers, Mary upon the witness stand, Marty Bull grinning at him in the office; and he was afraid. But he only said:

"He's no good, Mary, that's a fact!"

She freed herself from him. "I'm all right now," she said, scrubbing at her hands with her apron, mechanically stripping it off. "Only, Henry, I'm forty-two years old. And Harry isn't ever coming back to me. And I want babies, Henry." Her voice quickened, her tone touched a higher pitch, vibrating there, jangling like a wire with broken ends. "I want just one baby anyway."

Henry hesitated, said thoughtfully: "You want to marry George."

She nodded, not looking at him, as though she were ashamed. "I guess so."

"I wish you'd married him at the start," he said abruptly. "Father and I would have got along. And you'd been happier."

"Oh, he's been so unhappy too," she cried. "It's him as much as me, Henry. He's so lonely all the time."

"I guess you could say Harry's deserted you," Henry considered, half to himself.

"I know you're going to hate it," she confessed miserably. "It'll bother you, Henry. Maybe there's some way without bringing you into it."

"Have you talked to George?" Henry asked.

She shook her head. "No," she said. Added wistfully: "We don't talk about anything, Henry. Only I know the way he feels."

"Cy Malgrave's a lawyer," Henry suggested. "Maybe he could do it."

Mary said reluctantly: "I don't like him. I don't think I do."

"I guess he's a good lawyer," Henry told her. "We can talk

to him, anyway." He added courageously: "I'll talk to him if you want, Mary."

"I'm going to do it," she cried, frightened, and fighting down her fear. "Him or someone. I've made up my mind, Henry. Not to go on and just get old. . . ."

Henry was considering. "We don't want anything in the papers," he suggested uncomfortably. "Maybe you better not see George any more, till after."

She nodded, weeping again. "Yes, yes. I'll do anything you tell me to, Henry."

"I'll see," Henry promised; and he came to her again and held her uncomfortably in his arms. "Only you've got to stop being so miserable, Mary," he urged, his tone heartening, jocular. "We'll go ahead right away; only you've got to be cheerful about it. You've got to stop crying all the time."

"I will," she pledged herself. "I will, Henry."

There seemed no more to say, yet Henry did not know how to end it; how to get himself away. The dilemma solved itself; Mary turned her head, said softly: "The baby's awake. I'll go pick her up."

He thought Shirley would go; but he was glad of escape, so made no dissenting move. Mary left him there; he stayed for a while in the kitchen, unhappily considering what was to be done. He was a little bewildered, uncertain and disturbed; found himself harassed, unaccountably, by thought of Marty Bull.

VIII

One Sunday afternoon toward the middle of August, Mat Prior came to the house in a horseless carriage, with Fanny Day on the high seat beside him; they turned the corner with a loud hiss and roar, and came to a stop at the gate, enveloped in a cloud of steam. Henry and Shirley and young Dan were on the front veranda, and Mary was upstairs with the baby and Cynthia. The baby had just wakened from its nap; Mary was dressing the two little girls for the afternoon.

When Mat made his spectacular appearance at the corner and approached the house, Shirley and Henry and the young-

ster looked that way; and Shirley cried: "Henry, it's Mat." And by the time the machine stopped before the gate, they were moving toward it, Dan stumbling gravely beside them. Dan was a child inclined to sobriety and contemplation; now he stood silent by, listening, his wide eyes seeing all there was to see.

Mat brought the machine to a stop and shouted to them: "Hello, folks!" And Fanny Day jumped to the ground in a flutter of ruffled skirts, brushing the dust from them, her eyes dancing, her cheeks bright, her voice a little shrill. "Shirley, it's wonderful!" she cried.

"You're scared half to death this minute," Shirley told her.

"I'm not either," Fanny insisted; and Mat protested:

"Pshaw, what is there to be scared of?"

"When she catches fire, I suppose you jump," Henry suggested derisively; and Mat laughed and said:

"Sure. Jump and let her burn. More where she came from." He added, challengingly: "Want to take a ride?"

"Nowhere I want to go," Henry told him.

"How about you, Shirley?"

Shirley hesitated; and Fanny cried: "Yes, go on, Shirley. It's wonderful!"

Young Dan touched his mother's skirt, and Shirley dropped her hand upon his head. "No, I don't think I'll go," she said hesitantly. "It's too dusty."

Henry saw his son's wide eyes; saw them turn back to Mat with something in them like dumb awe; and he changed his mind. "Wait till I get my hat," he told Mat. "I'll ride around the block with you."

"That's the way," Mat applauded. "Come ahead."

Henry went back to the house for his hat; came out with a countenance wiped clean of care and all concern. He was, secretly, curiously stirred and moved by this adventure; he had perceived for some time past that he must one day ride in such a machine as this, but the issue had never been put straightforwardly before him. He was, honestly, afraid; the thing went faster than a bicycle, or at least faster than the ordinary gait of a bicycle, and it seemed curiously out of control. Yet he must come to it; must accept Mat's invitation now, or forfeit prestige with Dan. And he was beginning to perceive and to accept the responsibility of making Dan proud of him. So, a little fearfully, he climbed into the seat beside Mat and held fast to its side as they rolled, with a sudden flurry of hissing steam, away along the street. They went further than he had expected; he came back at last with a

sense of deliverance, alighted in a bounding exhilaration. And in his own new confidence urged Shirley, too, to go.

When she declined, Dan spoke at last. "Can I go, Uncle Mat?" he inquired, and Mat cried:

"Why sure, Buster. Climb up here."

Shirley cried: "Oh, Henry. . . ." But Henry laughed at her.

"Let him go," he advised. "Be good for him. A new experience."

So they stood waiting, watching Dan depart then from them; and Shirley held Henry's arm and whispered: "You're sure it's all right?" And Fanny Day babbled at their sides, told them that Mat had leave to take a car out on Sundays, regularly, and experiment with it.

"He's a wonderful engineer," she explained. "Knows so much about them. . . ."

And Shirley turned to her a quick, attentive eye.

When presently Mat brought Dan home again, and he and Fanny drove away, Shirley and Henry walked back to the veranda, while young Dan—driven into volubility for once—told them all the wonders of his journey. When they sat down on the porch, the boy proceeded toward the rear of the house and returned with the wooden cart that was at the moment his pride and joy. He sat on the forward end of it, holding to the tongue, propelling himself with vigorous sideward kicks against the ground; and they perceived that he was already driving an automobile of his own. Henry watched him, smiling a little.

"He'll be at it in a little while, like Mat, Shirley," he said. "First thing you know."

Shirley shook her head. "Oh, Henry, he's nothing but a baby yet," she protested.

"Pretty near six years old," Henry reminded her. For a little neither of them spoke, then Henry added: "You know, he'll be starting to school this fall."

"School?" she cried. "Why he's not six yet, Henry."

"Will be in November," he insisted. "He might as well get a start. He's growing up, Shirley."

"I thought—maybe you'd teach him at home, till he's really old enough," she suggested wistfully. "You said you would, you know."

"He knows the alphabet already," Henry replied. "But he'll learn to read quicker, working with other children. Yes, school's the place for him."

He had in fact made some attempt at Dan's instruction, but

progress was slow and discouraging, youthful attention was inclined to wander. "He'd better go to school," he said again.

She laughed unhappily. "He seems like my baby still," she confessed. "Look at him, Henry. Pushing that wagon around."

Henry looked and chuckled; and abruptly he rose and went down the steps to join Dan. They found a watering pot without a handle and adjusted it under the bed of the wagon; and Henry pushed the vehicle while Dan steered, and Henry furnished the hissing of the steam till he was red in the face from his exertions. Shirley, watching, laughed softly at them both called to Henry once:

"You're not a day older than he is, Henry."

"S-s-s-s-sssssssss!" said Henry, being steam; and Dan called:

"Papa's not here, mama! I'm going to the office to get him."

"S-s-s-s-s!" Henry corroborated. "S-s-s-s-s!" And they vanished around the corner of the house at breakneck speed.

2

The matter of Dan's schooling went unmentioned for a day or two, but it weighed on Henry's mind. Considering the question, it began to seem to him that there was, after all, no hurry. Dan would have time enough for an education; life lay all before him. Let him have babyhood while he might; it was slipping through his fingers, never to return. Shirley—this was the fashion in which he shaped his thoughts—Shirley should have her way. She wished to keep her son a baby for another year; and Henry would yield to her. So in their hours together he avoided the matter, spoke no more of it, was willing that it should be ignored.

But one night about a week later, Shirley said to him: "You know, Henry, Dan will have to have a new suit. He can't go to school in his Lord Fauntleroy suit. The other boys would make fun of him."

"School?" Henry repeated. Flushed a little, then said carelessly: "Oh, I've been thinking that over, Shirley. I guess you're right. There's no hurry about that. Let him wait another year."

She shook her head. "No, I think he ought to start with the boys his own age," she said bravely. "Of course I'd like to keep him a baby always; but I can't. I didn't mean to make a fool of myself about it, Henry."

"Oh, you'll be unhappy if he goes," he insisted. "And it doesn't matter."

"I've thought it all over," she told him. "At first I thought he could have his hair cut and not wear a white collar and make his suit do; but it wouldn't do to play in, and he'd play at school. I thought we could get him a little serge suit. One of those sailor blouses."

He grumbled something, finding no words; and she went on gently: "I've been down to visit the school, and I saw the teacher. Miss Henders. She's a nice little thing, Henry; and she says it's much better for them to start with the children their own age. She says lots of children start just before they're six years old. She says the first year is really more play than study. They have games and things. And I've planned it all out. . . ."

"You said you didn't want him to go," he reminded her. "So I gave in to you. And now you go and change around. That's like a woman."

"Well," she explained, "I talked to Mary about it, and she said he was too young; and that made me see how silly it was of me. Of course he's not too young. If other children his age can do it."

"I'll bet he'll be homesick," Henry urged. "You're just going to make him miserable."

"He'll have to learn," she said with a bright courage. Her eyes were for a moment cloudy. "I expect he'll be unhappy the first day or two, but he'll learn. He'll be a little man about it."

Henry felt himself tangled in a net, impalpable but strong. He gave over the argument, and the matter lapsed again.

During the succeeding days, their intentions seesawed. Henry brought himself to the point of agreeing with Shirley, only to find doubts in her; her doubts confirmed his new resolution. And when again he was uncertain, she was sure. Perhaps in the end they would have deferred the matter to another year; but Mary's steadfast opposition determined them. She was so outspoken in her insistence that Dan was too young that each of them felt a reproach implied; each of them thought her doubtful of Dan's powers; and their jealous determination to convince her she was wrong decided the question in the end.

Only Shirley, wise in Henry's heart, refrained from presenting the affair to him in form too concrete and actual; he had no glimpse of the preparations, no understanding of her activities, and no further hint of her fears till the morning of the day arrived. School opened that year on the fourteenth of September; and Henry left the house, as he always did, about

seven o'clock in the morning. In the moment before he was to go, Shirley produced before him Dan, garbed for the great adventure, stiff and scrubbed and still with fearful apprehension.

His hair had been cut the day before; it had been hitherto long enough so that by a dexterous use of brush and comb and water Shirley had been able to make it seem to curl. Now it was straight and harsh, wetted down upon his head as though there were a taut pull on each particular hair; his very eyebrows seemed to arch under the strain, and there was an inverted curl above his right temple where Shirley had brushed the hair flat on his brow, then held it with her hand while she brushed the ends to the side and slicked them there. His body was enveloped in a heavy serge sailor blouse with a device upon the arm; a great black ribbon was knotted as a tie in front. His pants were small and spare; and his stockings, gartered above the knees, already showed an inclination to reveal his legs clad in ankle-length underwear between stocking and trousers.

Shirley produced him proudly. "There, Henry," she exclaimed. "He's all ready, and he's so happy, aren't you, Dan?"

There was an unaccustomed fire in Dan's eye; he had caught the infection of his mother's excitement, and for a moment they looked so much alike that Henry laughed aloud. Then Mary in the background said resentfully: "A baby like that!" And Henry cried:

" 'Member, Mary, when you slicked me up that way?"

She looked toward him, and for a moment the three of them, Mary and Shirley and Henry, were all very near tears; but Shirley signed to them that they must avoid, for Dan's sake, any emotional display; and she said to Dan:

"You see, sonny, papa went to school just like you."

Dan looked at Henry searchingly. "Did you?" he asked.

"Sure did," Henry told him. "Yes sir. Why say, you'll like it, Buster. School's great. Lots of fun."

"Oh," said Dan, and Henry, with a furtive relief, escaped from the house and departed to the office. He had a vague feeling that Shirley would be unhappy, that he ought to stay to comfort her; but he was glad to lose himself in his tasks, try to forget the little boy's alert and fearful eyes.

He was, nevertheless, anxious to come home in time to see Dan before his bed hour; but Ben Harris gave him a final task to do, and when he did reach the house at last it was near dark and Shirley told him Dan was gone to bed.

"He was tired," she explained. "I thought he'd better go to bed early, Henry. You can see him in the morning, dear."

The dregs of strong emotion lingered in her tones; and he asked vaguely:

"All right, isn't he?"

"Oh, yes," she assured him.

"Sure he is," he agreed.

Mary, who had been in opposition heretofore, said proudly: "He was the bravest little man you ever saw. Marching home alone!" She was beaming; and Henry, looking at her, perceived that her misgivings were forgotten. But he was too wise to remind her of her former attitude.

"I'll bet he was," he assented.

They repeated to him, during supper, the account Dan had given of his day. He had come home a little swelled with his own importance, a little inclined to patronize. "There was a difference in him already, Henry," Shirley confessed.

"He's not a baby any more," Mary added. "He's a boy now, Henry." She continued quickly: "And he said they sang songs and Miss Henders told him he was a good singer. You remember you used to sing beautifully, Henry. Maybe he will, too."

Henry laughed at her affectionately. "You'd have made a high tenor out of me, Mary, if you could."

"I think if you hadn't smoked," she agreed; and he chuckled again.

"Well, I haven't smoked for quite a while now," he reminded her. "But I don't see that my voice has improved."

He perceived that Shirley presently grew quiet, said little more; and he guessed her heart. When they went upstairs at last she came and clung to him; and he held her, patting her shoulder, while she wept and laughed through her tears.

"There!" he protested. "I know how you feel, Hon."

"He's so little," Shirley sobbed. "And he was so miserable. He cried when I left him, Henry."

While they undressed she told him all about it. She had taken Dan to school. "He held tight to my hand," she confided. And Miss Henders had received him in most friendly wise. "You'll like her, Henry," she said. "She's a sweet little thing, with curly brown hair and some gray in it, and the nicest eyes. And you can see she loves children. And she made friends with Dan right away."

Shirley stayed till the school bell rang, till Miss Henders began the business of ordering her new charges. "There were other mothers there," Shirley told him, and laughed a little.

"All of them so worried and so awfully reassuring; and the children squirming around. And then Miss Henders said for us to go home. She said to the children: 'Now our mothers are going home and leave us to get acquainted.' And there was a sort of stunned silence for a minute. You could see they hadn't counted on that."

So she put Dan in his seat, she said. "And some of the children were crying out loud, and I could see he wanted to," she confessed. "But I told him he had to be brave so I would be proud of him. You know he is brave. But there were tears just streaming down his cheeks when I came away. He just sat there and looked after me, with the tears in his eyes." She laughed sobbingly. "I stood there in the door waving to him and calling goodby till I realized what a fool I was, Henry."

He nodded sympathetically. "Tough on you, all right," he agreed. For once, this night, he was ready for bed before her. "But after you left, he was all right, I expect."

"He said he was," she agreed.

"What'd he say about it all?" he asked. "Talk a lot?"

"No," she confessed. "No, he was so—so reserved, I was almost afraid of him. Tired, I guess. He said they cut things out with scissors all morning."

"Come home for dinner, did he?"

"Yes. And he asked me to walk back with him this afternoon. But he wouldn't let me go in." Her voice was choking, for all the laughter in her eyes.

When they were abed, in the darkness, she held his hand and drifted into sleep; but Henry lay a while awake, thinking. Dan no baby now, but a boy; soon to be a man.

Henry felt, wearily, a little old; as though his own youth were in this day surrendered to his son.

IX

Mary's divorce petition came up before the December term of court. Henry, if he had misgivings, kept them to himself; and Mary, if her determination wavered, fought down her fears. During the intervening months Henry had sometimes thought she was unhappy, uncertain of the wisdom or the

justice of what she meant to do. She had always been equable and mild; but she had sometimes now moments of irritation, hours of brooding. Her tongue acquired an edge; she criticized Henry's attitude toward the children, and Shirley's, and she opposed them in little things. This was sometimes hard for Shirley; it was not easy to have another woman in her house.

"Of course, I'm fond of Mary," she told Henry. "But she's so contrary, sometimes."

"She's upset," Henry urged. "Worried, all the time. About her divorce. After it's done, she'll be different, Hon. She's done a lot for us."

"Oh, I know," Shirley agreed, "and I'm grateful, too. . . ."

They had committed themselves to this enterprise, this business of freeing Mary from Harry Coster. Within a day or two after the first opening of the matter, Henry went to Malgrave to consult him. He went to Malgrave's office; found the man in a small, dusty room on an upper floor of one of the old buildings in the square that faced the Court House. Malgrave was, when Henry appeared, writing at his littered desk; and he was alone; and Henry, with a quick eye, judged that his practise was not large. He knew Malgrave more or less intimately. That is to say, Malgrave lived next door and they saw each other almost daily. Rose Malgrave and Shirley loaned and borrowed back and forth; and Kit, their daughter, at this time about nine years old, sometimes played with the children, commanding them the respectful submission youth gives to youth a little more mature. Sometimes Malgrave came to watch Henry work in his garden; sometimes they talked together in the evenings. Malgrave was a small, square man; he was even smaller than Henry, and his shoulders were broad, with that suggestion of deformity about them; and his countenance was habitually clad in a smile. Not particularly mirthful.

He smiled thus when he saw Henry, and made Henry welcome and waited for Henry to come to the point; and after some delay, some casting to and fro, Henry did so. Malgrave assumed, he thought, a manner curiously like that of an undertaker; he rubbed his hands and lowered his voice and was unctuously reassuring; and Henry escaped at last into the open air with an unpleasant feeling that he would blush the next time he met Malgrave at home.

But if he had misgivings he did not communicate them to Mary. All that he told her was reassuring. There would be, he promised, no difficulty; it was simply a question of time, of attending to certain formalities in lieu of notice to Harry

Coster of his wife's intention, and of waiting their turn in court.

"Cy says not to worry," he explained. "He'll look out for you. You don't have to do a thing till he says the word."

"I'll have to pay him," Mary said thoughtfully. "And I don't know as I can."

"I guess we owe you more than that," Henry retorted, affection in his tone. Her distress and travail of spirit worked upon him sore. "You don't have to worry about that, Mary."

But he himself did worry about it. He did not know how much a lawyer might be expected to charge for such services as this; and there were always demands upon his purse, demands that must be met. Life was full of obligations; they laid small hands upon you, not crushingly, yet clinging in a surprising way. He felt sometimes, vaguely, that he was tugging against an increasing and relentless load.

Shirley worried a good deal about the situation; she was distressed; and she was fearful, too. "Something may happen, may go wrong at the end. Harry may come back. I don't think Mary could stand it," she said. "She's counting on it so."

"Don't bother yourself," Henry urged, striving to make his tone carelessly assuring. "Nothing's going to happen."

"And I'm going to miss Mary," she added. "There's so much work to do; and I don't seem to be able to keep up with it. Even with her here."

"Leave it to me," he protested, his arm about her shoulders. "I'll make some arrangement, Hon."

He paid Malgrave a retainer fee; and he paid small preliminary expenses of advertising and the like; and then the matter seemed to lapse. Weeks passed, and months, and nothing happened. Only Mary's unrest and unhappiness became more manifest; she lost weight and color. Watching her, Henry decided at last that she was miserable with loneliness for George Nye; and he said to her one day:

"You know, Mary, I don't mind if you want to see George once in a while. I just wish you wouldn't go around with him all the time."

She made no comment; but she looked at him, quickly, in such fashion that he was abashed as though he had blundered into a sacred place, and turned away and left her alone. But after that he knew that now and then she and George encountered, in ways that were casual in appearance, yet infinitely precious to these two. Mary went more and more often to shop in the store where his duties lay; she contrived

small errands, and did them singly, one purchase at a time, and once or twice Henry invited George to the house. He was uneasy at these times, till it occurred to him to ask Ben Harris, too; and this led him in the end to confide the situation to Ben.

Harris heard him gravely. "George hadn't told me," he confessed when Henry was through. "He's a fine old fellow, Henry. A heart as delicate as a woman's. Never did a deliberate wrong in his life, I suppose."

"He's not so very old, except he acts old," Henry suggested.

"He's fifty-one," Harris assured him. "I've known him twenty years or so, you know. He's six years older than I am, and I'm forty-five."

"Mary's forty-two," Henry commented.

"I saw this Coster once or twice," Ben said, half to himself. "Big, florid, reddish hair; the sort of man you want to kick?"

"I thought he was pretty fine first time I saw him," Henry confessed. "I guess he went out of his way to make a hit with me. Treated me like a man, and I was still just a boy. But afterwards, I got to dislike him pretty thoroughly." He added: "He's—no good. Not dishonest, maybe; but irresponsible. He took all Mary's money; took the life out of her too, Ben. In a way. And he came back here two or three years ago and borrowed six thousand dollars from my father-in-law."

Ben whistled. "He must be a good talker," he commented.

"The first time you see him," Henry agreed. "Mr. Prior's pretty shrewd; but Harry fooled him. I guess Mr. Prior believes in him, right now." And he added: "We haven't told Mr. Prior about the divorce. Keeping it as quiet as we can."

Harris nodded. "Probably the neighbors like to talk you over," he suggested.

"I'm hoping," Henry confessed, "to keep it out of the papers." He looked at Harris doubtfully. "If we can."

The editor nodded. "I'll take care of it," he agreed. Agreed, too, to come to the house with George Nye for Sunday dinner. "We're old friends of you all," he commented. "Can't start any talk on that."

And he added, after a moment: "Fred Cook doesn't think much of Malgrave." Then saw the quick fear in Henry's eyes and added: "I guess he's all right, though."

The time dragged on. They encountered legal delays; once or twice expected the case would be reached only to have it postponed again. Malgrave himself directed one postponement,

because, he explained to Henry, he was otherwise engaged at the time. "You're not in any hurry, are you?" he asked; and looked at Henry in a sly way. So Henry was forced to say:

"No, no! Except of course we want to get it over with."

2

Long weariness dulled at last Henry's doubts and uncertainties. He did, this summer, little work on his novel; energy was lacking for the task. But he found at times some comfort in talk with David Pell. Pell's novel had been at last accepted by a publisher; would be brought out, David expected, in the spring. Henry perceived, apprehensively, that a gulf was slowly widening between him and David. Pell's work at the State House had given him contacts of a different order from those which Henry's tasks had brought his way; Pell had intellectual power, imagination, vision; he had a background Henry would always lack; and he was, Henry saw, finding a place in that gentle life which went on behind the bland fronts of the homes on the Hill. Henry felt no envy; he knew himself too well. For him to achieve a newspaper career was a matter for some self congratulation; but for Pell, on the other hand, it must be but a stepping stone.

"He'll be a great novelist, some day," Henry thought. "And he deserves it, too."

He had no fears for their friendship. Their lives might take different ways, but he would always be fond of David, and he knew, unquestioningly, that Pell would always like him.

Pell was able in these months to reassure him, to quiet his most definite fear, his dread of possible publicity.

"I've talked to Ben Harris about it," Henry confessed. "He said he'd keep it quiet, but I don't know."

"He will," Pell agreed. "Don't worry about that, Henry."

"The trouble is," Henry urged, "Ben's got to print the news. I remember when George's first wife killed herself, he printed it; and he was George's best friend. He told me then that an editor has to print the news."

Pell smiled. "Ben's older now," he commented. "He'll keep this out of the *Tribune*, and the other papers too." And he was so confident of this that Henry in the end came to accept the other's word.

The case reached its turn at last. Malgrave sent them word to be ready; suggested that they come to the Court House in order to be on hand. There was no need, he had explained,

that Shirley come; Mary herself, and Henry, would suffice. So Mary and Henry spent one morning in the Court House corridors waiting; and Marty Bull saw Henry there.

Bull was working on another story, a murder trial in one of the other sessions; but he discovered Henry, and stopped and spoke to him, asked:

"What you up here for, Beeker?"

Henry's fears revived. He hesitated, then lied. "Ben sent me to watch one of these divorce cases," he explained. "It's coming up any time."

Bull nodded; but he looked past Henry and saw Mary, and for a moment he was puzzled. Then recognition came to him, and he laughed.

"That's your sister, isn't it?" he asked.

Henry did not answer, and he laughed again.

"I see. Going to get rid of Coster, is she? Don't blame her. I'd do the same if I was her. He's a bad egg."

Henry, in desperation, appealed to him. "We're keeping it quiet," he said miserably.

"Sure!" Bull agreed. "Sure you are. Everybody does." He grinned, and lifted his hand, and passed on his way.

The case was not reached that day, but the next; and it passed with a merciful quickness. Mary had her moment on the stand, and Henry too. Malgrave questioned them in low tones; the Judge leaned to hear; the few spectators were inattentive. Mary was not a romantic figure, not one to command attention. When Henry was done, Malgrave spoke for a space to the Judge, and the latter nodded to the clerk, initialled the libel, and the thing was done. Malgrave led them from the room; parted from them in the corridor.

"That's all," he said, and looked at Mary with his eternal smile. "You can't marry for six months. That's all!"

Mary trembled and turned vaguely white; and Henry said hurriedly: "Oh, she's not going to get married."

"Of course not," Malgrave agreed unctuously. "But I thought some dashing young man might come along. . . . Goodby."

They got away almost furtively, hurrying, looking this way and that. Outside Henry breathed deeply, full of a great relief. "You go on home," he told Mary gently. "I'll go see George, let him know it's all right."

She had lowered her veil; but he saw her tears. She said chokingly: "Yes, yes, Henry. I'll go home."

"I'll tell him," he promised awkwardly. "Don't cry, Mary. . . ." And their ways diverged.

Henry found George in the store, a vaguely incongruous figure, with his face of a clown and his high bald head atop a long formal coat and pearl gray trousers. Henry spoke to him in a lowered tone; said simply:

"It's over with, George. Nothing happened. She's got it."

He saw the man's lips twitch; and George hid them with his hand. "Thank you," he said gravely. Henry thought, suddenly, that George looked badly; was even thinner than he had used to be.

He got back to the office at noon, to find Marty Bull standing by Ben's desk; and something in their postures caught his eye. Without his own volition he went that way; saw on the desk a typed sheet bearing Marty's name; caught the first sentence of the story there.

> "A Klondike widow got her divorce today in the second session. Mrs. Harry Coster. . . ."

"I don't want it," Harris was saying. "It's of no importance. We're not printing it. Nobody's touching it."

Bull said argumentatively: "You've printed others like it, Ben. It's news."

Harris shook his head; folded the sheet of paper and spiked it on his spindle. "It's out," he repeated.

Marty laughed. "What's the matter with it?"

The editor hesitated; then he said slowly: "It's a matter of courtesy to Beeker here, Bull. You know that. And—it's not your affair, in any case."

"When I spend half an hour getting a story, I don't like to see it thrown away," Bull retorted. "This is getting to be a dead sheet."

"That's all," Harris said curtly; and Bull laughed again and turned away. Ben met Henry's eye and smiled reassuringly; and Henry went to his desk, sick and weary, yet full of a great relief.

At the end of the week he had an unpleasant moment. Harris discharged Bull; and Marty came to Henry's desk and told him, grinning in an ugly fashion. "Out of courtesy to Mr. Henry Beeker," he said derisively.

"You didn't have to make a row about it," Henry urged.

"Oh," Marty drawled. "I don't make rows. I'll be back, son. I'll be back some day."

He lounged away; and Henry, wearily, could only watch him go.

X

Henry made, in January, the last payment on the house; the long-standing obligation to Clem Prior was discharged. Henry and Shirley had once thought they would make a ceremony of this occasion. They had planned to be very gay and festive, to burn the mortgage in hilarious fashion and with all formality. But when the time actually came, he found himself not particularly moved. There was not even a momentary triumph in knowing that the house was wholly his. It had seemed, when they were married, attractive and adequate; but now they were somewhat crowded, the older children had to sleep in one room, and the baby with Mary; and he and Shirley had sometimes thought, vaguely, of moving, if they could sell this house in which they were. So this achievement was an empty one.

Also, Clem's attitude distressed Henry. He had showed, when he heard of Mary's divorce, a resentment as keen as though that had been a personal injury. "Can't expect much from Coster now," he pointed out.

"You couldn't anyway," Henry protested.

"Well, he was your brother-in-law," Clem retorted. "And I could use the money he has of mine. And what I've lost on this house, too, letting you have it cheap, the way I did."

"Well, you made the proposition," Henry reminded him. "I didn't ask for it."

And Clem ended in a silence that was still full of accusation.

Henry did not repeat this conversation to Shirley; there was, he felt, no need of hurting her. But he was to remember Clem's attitude, resentfully. He put the cancelled mortgage in his bureau drawer, and forgot it there. Shirley found it back under his shirts one day when she was putting the laundry away, and she asked Henry that night if he meant to keep it. He shook his head.

"No, I just stuck it in there," he explained.

So the next time Shirley saw it, she put it in the waste

basket and it eventually found its way to the trash barrel and so disappeared. When they came to sell the house, years later, Henry tried to find it, and Shirley said she had thrown it away; and he told her it made no difference, that the fact of its payment in full had been duly recorded at the time.

"I just wondered what happened to it," he explained. And that was the end of it, tamely, with no gay festivity, no triumph, no formality at all.

2

That winter Ben Harris shifted Henry to the copy desk. Hitherto, Henry had been occupied even through the winter with his columns of bicycle stuff; but this year the exigencies of make-up forced his department into a narrower compass, and no one seemed to care, so Henry had less and less to do. He had been accustomed, for the past year, to edit his own copy and write the heads and cross-heads, so he fitted easily enough into the copy desk work, and the change was good for him, gave him a quickened interest in the general field of the newspaper's concern.

He began to read all the papers that came into the office, filling his memory with names and facts and all the lore which is a part of the equipment of a desk man. He discovered that in such matters his memory was retentive; and this surprised him. He and David Pell discussed the phenomenon at lunch one day. David had come to the office for his pay envelope. He seldom appeared there for any other cause, sending his copy by messenger, writing it at the State House. Henry saw him talking to Ben Harris, and he watched with an abstracted intentness, his eyes at once fixed and remote. He was considering the difference in David, the change in him. It was not so much a matter of clothes, though Pell was rather better dressed than the other men in the office.

"It's something inside him," Henry decided, vaguely, and thought: "He reads such a lot, knows so much. Maybe that's why."

Pell, swinging his eyes around the room, saw Henry, and discovered his regard and when he was done with Harris, crossed to the copy desk and asked: "Ready for lunch, Henry? Come on out with me."

Henry eagerly agreed; they went together to the washroom, Henry full of talk, Pell quietly attentive; then down the street to a restaurant Henry recommended. And when they were seated, Pell remarked on Henry's new work.

"Like it, do you?" he asked.

Henry nodded; and he spoke of this matter of memory. "You know, Dave," he explained. "When I was handling the cycle news, I met hundreds of people; kept seeing the same ones over and over; and I always remembered their faces, but I couldn't keep their names in mind to save my life. Funny, isn't it."

"It's visual memory, probably," Pell suggested. "If you only hear a name you forget it; but if you see it, a picture of it stays in your mind." He added: "Like the work, do you?"

"Darned interesting," Henry agreed. "Harris is a great one for keeping stories short, so you have to cut a lot of the stuff; and that's interesting, to see how much you can cut and not lose any at all. Not change the meaning any. And then it's interesting seeing a sentence that doesn't sound right and trying to make it right. It's different with your own copy; it always sounds right to you. But sometimes you can't even tell what the meaning is, when someone else wrote it. Charlie Niblo turns in terrible stuff; and Jimmy Horn, too."

"Horn doesn't care, probably," Pell commented. "And Charlie's too old to learn."

"He doesn't even make decent-looking copy," Henry insisted. "It's all blurred and crossed out. He might at least learn to use a typewriter properly!"

Pell smiled. "That's one of the differences between men, Henry; their capacity for learning new things. . . . Charlie's a good, reliable man, at that. I've had him helping me out, once or twice. He knows everybody in town."

Henry nodded, said almost diffidently: "It's fun reading your copy, Dave. We don't have to change it at all. Every word's right."

"Change it if you feel like," David told him. "Someone said it takes two men to write a story; one to write it and the other to edit it. Something in that, too."

"Say," Henry commented. "I read that story you had about the Gold Standard act, Sunday. Don't you think Bryan will make an issue out of it, in the campaign?"

"I think he'll do most of his shouting about imperialism," David explained. "Free silver is dead, and he knows it. He'll cheer for Aguinaldo, now. You shall not press down a crown of thorns upon the naked Igorrote!" Henry chuckled; and Pell added: "You're going to have a chance to vote for your friend T. R., Henry. They'll nominate him for vice president, I think."

"He won't take it, will he?" Henry asked.

Pell made a little gesture with his hand. "He can't decline it, very well. Lodge is urging him to take it, to stand still and be a nice boy." He added soberly: "He's under a lucky star, too."

They spoke of David's novel. It would appear, he said, some time in May. Henry's book was not progressing very rapidly, he confessed. "I keep going back and changing it," he explained. "And I don't get a lot of time on it."

"Have you read 'Richard Carvel'?" David asked. Henry shook his head. He had read none of the novels beginning to be popular, and Pell recommended to him "When Knighthood Was in Flower." "You're a romantic," he added. "You'll like it."

"Don't you like them yourself?" Henry challenged.

Pell nodded. "Yes. But—'David Harum' is more the sort of thing I'd like to do. Recognizable people; neighbors. When a writer goes to a field too remote, no one can check up on him; he's apt to take liberties. I want to write about people everyone knows."

When they were separating, David said suddenly: "Oh, by the way, Henry, how are the children? And Shirley?"

"You haven't seen them for months," Henry commented. "Dan's in school this winter. They're fine."

"Has he a dog?" David asked; and Henry shook his head. "No."

"A friend of mine tried to give me a pug the other day," Pell explained. "I had to take it; but the poor fellow isn't comfortable, shut up in the room all the time. I thought Dan might like him."

"I guess he would," Henry agreed. "I've been kind of planning on getting him a Newfoundland, only they eat as much as a man."

"I'll bring him out Sunday, if you'll let me come to dinner," David suggested; and Henry was delighted to agree.

"Shirley'll be mighty glad to see you," he told Pell. "And maybe you'll look through what I've written on 'I Speak of Africa.' I'll get Mat—that's my brother-in-law—to come and take us for a ride if you want."

"Oh, we'll just sit and visit," Pell told him. "I'll be there by noon."

On the way back to the office Henry thought he must make it his business to see more of David. "He's growing, getting bigger," he told himself. "I can learn a lot from a man like Dave."

He was full of eager, upward strivings; had always some such inspiration from his hours with David Pell.

3

David brought the pug on Sunday; and young Dan welcomed it with such a tempestuous affection that the dog, built for dignity, was vaguely discomfited thereby. The creature began, after a little, to look around in a vague effort to discover some avenue of escape from the attentions of the boy; and he seemed to discover in Mary a kindred soul, one to whom he could turn. It was a rainy Sunday in March and they were obliged to sit indoors; and the pug came again and again to crouch at Mary's feet; and Dan followed each time to lug the beast away again and force him into unwilling playfulness. Till finally the dog managed to leap lumberingly, into Mary's lap and hold his footing there; and Mary—to Dan's demand—said in a conciliatory tone:

"Let him rest a little while, won't you, Danny? I don't think he likes to play so hard."

Dan was insistent, so she yielded to him. Nevertheless she watched with some pain in her eyes the suffering of the pug thereafter; and when David Pell was gone, Dan beginning by this time to weary of his sober playmate, she took the pug herself, and he slept at last, with long sighs of relief, upon her round knees.

Dan had, with a filial devotion, named the pug Henry; but the creature—to avoid confusion in nomenclature—became Hen. Also, he became, in effect, Mary's dog and following her around during the day and fleeing to her when Dan, returned from school, sought his company. Dan by and by tired of the struggle; and the relation became a settled one. Mary found a curiously keen pleasure in the adoration of the animal; and Henry and Shirley saw this with a tender amusement.

"It's just that she naturally mothers everything," Shirley pointed out. "It's the way she is."

Mary did indeed mother the dog, almost as ardently as she cared for baby Mary. Beweeen them they filled her days with light; she was happy in the present, happy in looking forward to the future which was to open before her in a little while.

Mary's approaching marriage was in fact the principal matter in their thoughts and in their conversation during these

weeks of spring. She and George saw each other once, in March; but about that time Marty Bull returned to his old place on the *Tribune*, and this awoke in Henry such a keen alarm that he insisted upon their avoiding these encounters thereafter.

"Wait," he urged. "Wait till there's no one can say anything, and then I don't care."

They communicated by letter; but neither George nor Mary was much used to this medium, so they found in it small satisfaction. It was definitely arranged that they would be married early in July, and go away for a fortnight beginning with the holiday. And Mary, as the prospect drew near and nearer, began to bloom again; began to wear some of that rosy radiance which had been in her countenance when she achieved independence in the boarding house, when she attracted the attention even of the experienced Harry Coster.

Young Mat Prior enjoyed the situation; he had become curiously fond of Mary; called her Aunt Mary, and devised for her small attentions which she found delightful. He made her to some extent his confidante. She caught, for one thing, the infection of his enthusiasm for the automobile; and she used to quote to them facts and figures he had given her. He was becoming converted to the belief that the gas engine would replace steam and electricity as motive powers.

"He's trying to make them see it, where he works," Mary told Henry one day. "But he says they're stubborn there. And he's written to someone in Michigan, trying to get a job."

Henry was interested; but Shirley shook her head, smiling a little. "He won't go west as long as Fanny Day lives here," she predicted.

"A man's got to go where his work is," Henry urged; but Shirley was positive.

"His business right now is with Fanny," she said. "And will be, till it's settled, one way or another."

Henry smiled at her. "You women," he commented. "Always looking for things like that."

But Shirley met Mary's glance, and something seemed to pass between them, and she made Henry no reply.

4

With the blooming of spring, young Mat was more and more likely to drop in for supper in the evening, or for Sun-

day dinner. On Sunday Clem usually came with him; but since his wife's death Prior was apt to be quiet, and there was a coolness between him and Henry. So though he sat puffing at his straight pipe and watching the children with smiling eyes, he himself had very little to say. Sometimes Henry thought the older man was the prey of a vague concern; but he tried to put the thought aside. Shirley remarked that it was too bad her father had to live alone. But Henry reminded her that he had a woman to keep his house in order, and an old friend or two who sometimes called on him.

"I don't like that woman he has there," Shirley retorted.

"Takes good care of him, doesn't she?" Henry asked.

"Well, yes," she said grudgingly; and he touched her arm. "Don't worry about him, Hon," he urged. "He's all right."

He heard on the train one day a scrap of conversation which made him believe that perhaps Clem's store was not so prosperous as it had been; and he went to the store two or three times, trying to see for himself. But Henry was not expert in such matters, and to his eyes all was well. The shelves were loaded; the clerks were attentive; Clem in his office in the rear seemed as he always was.

Shirley must have heard some rumor that the business of the store was failing; for she asked Henry one night whether he had suspected it. He shook his head. "No," he said steadily. He had learned that there may be mercy in a well told lie. "No. What makes you think that, Hon?"

She hesitated. "Why—something I heard. And the delivery wagon needs a coat of paint, and papa's wagons were always so clean and bright."

He laughed at her, assuringly. "He's waiting for the mud to dry up," he suggested. "Don't you worry about your father, Shirley. He's a mighty shrewd man."

But he wondered whether she were as convinced as she seemed to be.

5

Mary had begun, during the late winter, to sew in anticipation of her marriage. She and Shirley sometimes worked all day together; and Henry was apt to come home at night to a sitting room littered with scraps of cloth, bits of thread, empty spools, pattern paper, and formless garments basted or pinned in shape. The two women had interminable talk about such matters as shirtwaists and the vogue for shorter

skirts. Mary was in doubt about shortening her skirts; she spoke of it with something very like confusion, doubtfully; and Shirley had to struggle to overcome her fears.

"Everybody will be wearing them," she insisted. "You'll be like everyone else; no one will think a thing about you, Mary."

"George is old fashioned," Mary suggested uncertainly. "I don't know whether he'd like me in short skirts or not."

"Don't be silly," Shirley advised, in a sprightly tone. "George isn't as old fashioned as you think he is. Doesn't he work in a store where they sell things to women? He'll want you to be properly dressed, Mary. He dresses beautifully himself."

"I don't know," Mary repeated. "I can't make up my mind."

But she was converted to shirtwaists; the two sent for patterns, they bought materials, and they were busy the day long, their work interrupted only by the necessity of running now and then to attend one or the other of the younger children. The baby was apt to play at their feet; liked to throw an empty spool across the carpet and scream with delight as it rolled away. She would pursue the spool and pick it up and throw it and laugh and pursue it again, almost endlessly. Cynt was more apt to want to help; more likely—if she found opportunity—to attempt dressmaking on her own account. Once she sewed a length of material which they had for the moment laid aside into a jumbled, tangled ball; and they were able to laugh at this, and pick the threads out and press the stuff into shape again. But on another day, when they were both off guard, she found scissors and attacked a shirtwaist just completed, and the result was such stark ruin that even Mary applauded the punishment Shirley visited upon the little girl.

Mary's figure was perhaps not designed for wearing shirtwaists; she was plump and her neck was short and heavy. The high collars irked her; and when she wore a stock it was sure to crumple down into a wrinkled string. At such moments Shirley would say impatiently:

"You'll just have to hold your chin up, Mary, as high as you can." And Mary, a little breathless and panting, would bravely try to do so.

They spent long hours before the mirror, using this expedient and that in the effort to make Mary assume some likeness to the pictured patterns; and sometimes Shirley was near despair. But she never confessed this to Mary.

Mat came in now and then to interrupt one of these sessions; and his laughter and his jokes made them both smile, made Mary bridle and blush with miserable pleasure. He fell to calling her "Bride!" Would greet her with: "How's the bride today?" Would embrace her, with a cry: "Everybody kiss the bride!" And when she colored, he laughed at "the blushing bride."

Henry at first thought this distressed Mary; he took Mat aside one day and remonstrated with him; but Mat said delightedly:

"Why Henry, she's tickled silly. Watch her. You'll see."

And Henry came to understand that Mat was right in this; that Mary was delighted to be teased. He laughed over this with Shirley one night. Spoke of Mary as "a silly old fool." But Shirley said wistfully:

"Let her be happy, Henry!"

And Henry, feeling that Shirley was criticizing him, feeling himself in the wrong, cried: "Don't you think I want her to be happy! But she is silly, just the same."

"She's like a girl," Shirley said softly; and Henry retorted nakedly:

"She's forty-three years old!"

Nevertheless he was, as the weeks passed, more and more content with Mary's happiness; she throve under it; she wore a calmness and a rich content, like a full river flowing between rich and lovely banks; life touched her kindly. Her anticipations were at once eager and fearful too. She would sit busy with her sewing, fingers moving skilfully, the pug named Hen in a snoring lump at her feet; and behind the lenses of her spectacles her eyes were like to shine.

Then, one night in early May, Mat Prior and Fanny Day came bursting in upon them, and there was a radiance in both their countenances; and Mat flung his hat at Henry, and he kissed Mary, and he cried:

"Well, Aunt Mary, you've done it."

Mary looked at him faintly pale, not understanding; But Shirley came slowly to her feet.

"What? Done what, Mat?" Mary protested.

"Couldn't stand it any longer," Mat told them all. "Watching all these preparations, watching the blushing bride. Fanny and I are going to get married too."

Shirley had Fanny in her arms, kissing her, crying: "Why, you dear girl. You dear girl!" And Fanny, laughing and crying too, held Shirley close and tight. And Mat demanded of them all, with immense pride:

"Isn't that great?"

And Fanny echoed, to Shirley, very softly: "Isn't it wonderful?"

Henry gripped the boy by the hand and groped for fit words, and said haltingly: "Why Mat, old man. Why say! Why son, you're all right. Why say, that's fine!"

"When was it? When did you decide?" Shirley asked Fanny, and Mat heard, and told them.

"Half an hour ago. Not half an hour ago." He made a great business of looking at his watch. "Twenty-one minutes ago."

"Tell us all about it," Shirley insisted. "It's too wonderful for anything!"

"Well," said Fanny, "we just talked it over, and Mat has to go to Detroit. . . ."

"Detroit?" Shirley echoed.

"Got a letter today," Mat told them proudly. "Good job and a chance to get ahead. Yes, sir. Go west, young man! That's me."

"So we decided," said Fanny soberly. "That it was the sensible thing to do."

Mat swung back to Mary again. "I saw what it was doing to you, Aunt Mary," he told her. "It looked good to me." And then bent quickly. "Why, what's the matter, Aunt Mary? What's the matter, Bride?"

"Nothing," she sobbed, and smiled. "I'm a fool. I cry so easy."

"This is no wedding, yet," he told her stoutly. "Not time to cry." And produced his tremendous handkerchief and took off her spectacles and dried her eyes, and wiped the thick lenses. They all laughed to see how strange, without her glasses, her demeanor was; and Mary laughed too. Then he put the glasses back upon her nose and she beamed upon them rosily, and Fanny came and kissed her cheek.

They were going to be married, they explained, about the time that George and Mary had planned. "I've got to go to Detroit first," Mat pointed out. "And get set there, and find some place to live and then I'll come back, just for a day, and take Fanny home with me." His eyes caught those of his sweetheart, and the boy's voice choked a little, and his eyes and hers held for a space, like a clasp of hands. "Take her back with me," he repeated. And abruptly crossed and kissed Fanny, there before them all; and Henry found himself drawing a little into the background, watching Shirley,

thinking back to their own rosy days; and Shirley looked at him and smiled a little, and he felt like weeping too.

"We'll have a double wedding," Mat cried. "How's that, Mary?"

"Oh, Fanny will want a wedding all her own," Mary protested.

"Have you told your people?" Shirley asked the girl. Fanny shook her head.

"But I think they maybe have guessed things might be this way," she confessed, with a little glance at Mat; and Shirley laughed and said:

"Of course they have. Everyone's known but Mat, long ago."

"I'm for a double wedding," Mat insisted. "Cut rates by wholesale. Think of what we'll save." He was half drunk with his own delight.

But Mary shook her head, and though her words were uncertain there was something like a panic terror in her tone. "No, no," she insisted. "No. I don't . . . Fanny . . ."

Henry, watching her, understood. There was sometimes this bond of understanding between him and his sister, so that they read each the other's thought. He knew what she was thinking now; that it would be bitter for her, and for George, both past their youthful, ardent days, to share the thin rapture of their nuptials with these two. Mat so young and strong; Fanny so straight and beautiful; their eyes afire with a quick bright flame. . . .

"No, I don't like double weddings either," said Henry positively. "That's settled, Mat. You don't get married but once; you want to have it to yourself."

"Pshaw," Mat protested. "I think it's a great scheme."

Henry caught his eye. "No, better not," he insisted; and shook his head. And Mat half caught the other's meaning, hesitated, said slowly:

"Why, all right then!"

Mary, stiff with fear in her chair, relaxed again, and sighed a little, and was still. . . .

Mat left for Detroit two days later; and Fanny came sometimes with her own sewing, to sit with Mary and Shirley in the bright spring afternoons, and to tell them the word she had from Mat. He was enthusiastic about his new place, about the business, about its future; and he had found a house they could afford to rent.

"It's little," said Fanny. "But it's painted white with green

blinds." And he would be able to come for her about the sixth of July.

"Then I can't go to your wedding," Mary said, almost with satisfaction. For she and George were to be married two or three days before. "We'll be gone, by then."

Shirley spoke of this to Henry that night. "I think she's pleased that she's going to be married first," she told him. "I think it hurt her that after she had had to wait so long, Mat and Fanny could just make up their minds and go ahead so quickly. But now she'll be married first, after all."

"She's entitled to have things happen right for her," Henry agreed. And added, diffidently: "I hope they do."

They promised to. There was no shadow in the sky.

But one day toward the middle of June, Ben Harris called Henry to his desk for a word aside. "Henry," he said. "When you get through today, stop past and see George, will you?"

Henry looked at him in quick attention. "Why?" he asked. "Isn't he at the store?"

"Got indigestion or something," Ben explained. "He decided to stay at home today and rest up. And he wanted to see you, if you can come."

"Why, yes," said Henry; and he felt a dew upon his brow. "Yes sure, I'll go up this afternoon."

XI

Ben Harris and George Nye had rooms on Louisburg Square and Henry knew where they were; when he left the office, toward five o'clock in the afternoon, he asked Ben: "Are you going home now?"

Harris shook his head. "I've got to go out to dinner tonight," he explained.

"I'll tell George you won't be home, then?"

Ben nodded. "I ought to be in by half-past ten," he replied.

So Henry went up the Hill alone. He would, vaguely, have preferred that Ben come with him; he had an unformed feeling not to be explained, that a wiser head than his own might be needed; was in fact shaken by something like a premonition, which he tried to laugh away.

He found George, seeming incredibly tall and lean in a heavy bathrobe, lying on a couch in the living room of their quarters; and George was glad to see him. There was, Henry marked, a curious anxiety in his eye; he said quickly: "Glad you've come, Henry. I was afraid you couldn't manage."

Henry nodded. "Oh, yes," he assured the other man, and he asked: "How you feeling? Not sick, are you?"

George shook his head. "No, no. No, I'm not sick." He hesitated a moment, then explained eagerly: "Just a little indigestion. I get this way sometimes. Eating around at restaurants is no way to live."

"Mary'll take care of you," Henry told him, in a jocular tone. "She'll straighten you out. She's a fine cook."

"Yes," George agreed eagerly. "Yes, sir, she surely is, Henry." He had risen to a sitting position when Henry came in, came half to his feet to shake hands, and then sat down again; and Henry chose a chair; and now George lay down once more on the couch, a little wearily. He lay on his left side, his right knee bent forward. And Henry thought he winced a little; and he asked:

"What's the matter? Stomach ache?"

"Oh, no," George told him. "No, I didn't feel very good yesterday and this morning I vomited my breakfast. Ben and I cook our own breakfasts here, but I couldn't keep mine down. And I felt kind of mean. Felt better after I got rid of it. So I took some castor oil and decided to stay home for a day. The castor oil gives me a little cramps, that's all."

"You'll be all right by morning, probably," Henry agreed. "Don't want me to get a doctor, do you?"

George grinned, his face like a clown's curiously distorted mask. "No, no. I'm too tough for doctors. They couldn't do anything with me. I have these spells." He was silent for a little; and Henry moved uneasily, wondering why the other man had sent for him. "How's Mary?" George asked.

"Oh, she's fine," Henry assured him. "Yes, she's fine. Busy sewing, making clothes. She's got clothes enough to run her a long time I'd say." He found a curious relief in talking. "You're going to have a dog on your hands when you and Mary get married," he added. "Dave Pell gave Dan a dog, a pug; but Dan's tired of it, and the dog sticks to Mary all the time, so she's going to take it."

"I like dogs," George replied.

"This dog snores," Henry commented. "I don't know but I'd rather have a dog that don't snore. His name's Hen."

He grinned. "Dan named him after me! Sleeps in Mary's room, and we can hear him snoring in the night."

George chuckled. "Ben says I snore kind of powerful myself sometimes," he remarked. "Now I can blame it on—Hen." His voice checked a little, and Henry had a curious impression that the other man was listening.

He laughed, a little too loudly. "I guess you won't fool Mary," he retorted. "She knows Hen's snore by now." George grinned, but made no immediate comment; and Henry said, after a moment: "Anything you want? I suppose I've got to go along to supper. Get home."

"Why, I just thought I'd like to see you," George confessed. He added: "You know, you look kind of like Mary. In a way. I've always thought so. You've been pretty good to her, Henry."

Henry flushed. "Well, she's been good to me, all her life." He chuckled. "I used to hate her, when I was a boy; but I can see now the way it was. She was trying to do for me, the best she knew. Did, too. Mary's done a lot for me. And I don't know how Shirley and I'd have got on without her, these last six or seven years."

"She'll miss being with you," George remarked. "You know, I was thinking I might get a house out near you there. So she won't be too lonesome in the day time when I'm away."

"You wouldn't want a very big house," Henry considered. "Guess you can find one."

"I wish you'd look around," George suggested; and Henry nodded, rising.

"I'll ask Clem," he replied. "He's likely to know of something." Added, with a chuckle: "I might rent you mine. It's pretty near too small for us, now. I've thought some we might have to move."

And he asked as he turned toward the door: "Want me to tell Mary you're at home?"

"No, no," George protested. "No, don't bother her. She'd worry. No, I'll be all right in the morning."

"Sure," Henry agreed. "Send word by Ben," he added. "If you're not, I'll come up again tomorrow. Don't want to take any chances, when you're going to get married right away."

"Bad luck to postpone a wedding!" George agreed, and chuckled. "Goodby, Henry. Much obliged for coming. And —look around for a house, will you? Talk to Mary."

Henry agreed to do so; and when he got home, while they

were at supper, he spoke of the matter. He found himself immediately under cross-examination by Mary. Where had he seen George? For how long? What had George to say? Was he well?

Henry, thinking fast, said that he and George lunched together. "I just thought I'd like it," he explained speciously. "So I went up and got him at noon. Sure, he's fine. Never saw him looking better. Don't worry about him, Mary."

She took faint alarm. "Why, I wasn't worrying. Is he all right? Why did you think I might worry?"

"You're always one to worry about George," Henry told her, in a jocular tone. "You can't think of anyone but him. You're as bad as Fanny. If she don't get a letter from Mat every day, she's wild."

"But—is he all right?" Mary insisted.

"If you'd seen the lunch he ate you'd have thought so," Henry told her.

"Well I'll be glad when he don't have to eat at restaurants," Mary commented; and then must know what George had eaten that day. And Henry devised an innocuous and healthful menu, and Mary was comforted thereby; and they discussed thereafter the houses that might be available.

But Henry told Shirley that night that George was in fact not well. "I guess I was more worried about him than I thought," he confessed. "Or I wouldn't have taken the trouble to lie to Mary."

She said chidingly: "You have a little trick of doing that, Henry. Trying to protect Mary, or me. I know when you tell me lies, dear. You don't fool me. But—I love you for it, too."

"He's so thin!" he said thoughtfully.

She laughed at him. "You're getting a little fat, Henry," she pointed out. "So you're beginning to be suspicious of thin people."

Henry rubbed his stomach. "I'm not fat," he protested.

"Well, you're thickening out," she insisted. "You're getting middle aged."

"I guess he'll be all right in the morning," he decided; and with this prediction managed some peace of mind, and so at last found sleep.

In the morning, Ben was at the office ahead of him; and Henry stopped at his desk to ask after George. Harris was in the midst of the business of cleaning his desk, getting matters in order for the day. "George?" he repeated, looking up in surprise. Then remembering: "Oh, he's all right. He wasn't

up, when I left. I left early. But he said he was all right."

"Was he going to the store?" Henry asked; and Harris nodded.

"Yes, I guess so," he replied. The day was Saturday and he was very busy; and Henry turned away.

Henry meant to go to the store at noon to see George; but his own work pressed upon him so that he was late in finding time to leave the office, and he knew George's own lunch hour was gone. So he forgot his intention. There was, he remembered, a telephone in the apartment George and Harris shared; George could call him if there were any need. He had to work a little later than usual; and he and Shirley were going to have supper with Will and Mary Gallop, so he hurried home. They left Mary to take care of the children. Mary Gallop—who had been Mary Day—had been sewing all afternoon with Fanny; and Fanny stayed to supper; and they were all very happy together. But on the way home Henry said doubtfully to Shirley:

"You know, I didn't hear from George today. I guess he's all right, though."

"Why, if he wasn't, he'd have let us know," Shirley assured him.

Yet Henry was not wholly content; he slept uneasily and he woke in the morning with George much in his mind. Thus it seemed to him he had expected such a summons when, at about half after ten o'clock, Fred Cook came to the door, called Henry outside.

"Harris called me up, Henry," he said. Henry himself had not yet put in a telephone. "He told me to tell you George Nye is kind of sick, and he thought you might want to come in."

"Sick?" Henry repeated.

"Harris has sent for a doctor," Cook explained. "But he thought you'd want to know. He said to tell you Nye is pretty sick. Something wrong with his stomach, he said."

Henry nodded, wetting his lips. "Did he say to tell Mary?" he asked; and Fred shook his head.

"He didn't say. He just said to tell you Nye was pretty sick and you might want to come in."

"Well, thanks," Henry told him. "Much obliged. I'll go in right away." He hesitated. "I might go over to your house and telephone," he considered, thinking aloud. Then shook his head, took his resolution. "No," he decided. "I'll just go along."

He turned back into the house a little wearily. Mary was

in the kitchen, preparing Sunday dinner, so he was free to seek out Shirley and confide in her; and he found in her, as he was always like to find when there was need, strength and comfort fine.

"I don't want to worry Mary unless I have to," Henry said, doubtfully.

Shirley touched his hand. "Yes," she agreed.

"But—I've a kind of feeling," Henry confessed. "I think I'll take her in with me."

Her fingers clasped his. "Shall I call her?" she asked, and he knew that she thought his decision wise.

So they went out to the kitchen together; and they found Mary, her face flushed with the heat of the stove, the pug waddling devotedly at her heels. She turned at their coming, and she looked at them; and the color drained from her cheeks at that which she saw in their eyes.

Henry said, with merciful haste: "Mary, George is sick. I'm going in to see him. I guess you'll want to come too."

She stood a moment, an unheroic figure, dumpy and dishevelled; and she pressed her hand faintly against her mouth. Then slowly nodded, and began to untie her apron; and then to move more swiftly. . . .

On the train, she asked only one or two questions. Henry said George had indigestion; and he confessed to her his deception of two days before. "He didn't want to worry you," he explained. "And Ben Harris told me he was all right yesterday."

She saw his great distress and regret; and she said gently: "It's all right, Henry. I know you do the way you think you ought to."

She added, a little later, under her breath: "Eating around at restaurants, ever since he was a boy."

And again reassuring Henry, always alive to his unhappiness: "Don't you blame yourself, Henry. . . ."

When they came to the place, the doctor was there, in the bedroom where George lay, and Ben Harris made them wait. He tried to be reassuring. "He's all full of gas," he said. "On his stomach. And he's sweating pretty bad. He took castor oil, but it just gave him cramps. I thought he ought to have a doctor. And I wanted you to know, in case you wanted to come in."

When she could, Mary went to George, and Henry and Ben Harris talked with the doctor. He was, Henry saw disapprovingly, an old man; and Henry thought him curiously uncertain, and unsure.

"I'll come back this afternoon," he promised; and they had from him no other certain word at all.

"The old ass!" Harris commented, when he was gone.

Henry said quickly: "I'm going to find Dave Pell. He'll know a good man."

"Dave has a telephone," Harris agreed. "I'll call him. You're right, I think."

Henry knocked and went into the bedroom; and he found Mary making George more comfortable. She bustled about the bed, her smile quick if unconvincing, her tone determinedly cheerful; and she smoothed the sheets, and touched George Nye's bald head, as though by accident, for the reassurance the faint contact gave her. Because he said it was more comfortable so, she put a pillow beneath his upraised knees as he lay on his back; and Henry, watching her, felt his heart ache like a wound.

After an hour or two David Pell came with a doctor; a man in whom they had from the first moment confidence. When he spoke, they knew, it would be with authority. The doctor and Ben Harris stayed for a while alone with George.

When they came out, at her first glimpse of their faces, Mary knew at last that which was to be. She was with George thereafter till, toward morning of the second day, he died.

2

Mat and Fanny must be married just the same. Mat had made all his plans; and they could not be changed. The world must go on.

Henry and Shirley thought Mary would not care to go to the wedding; but Mary shook her head. "If I don't," she told them thoughtfully, "you'll all be thinking about me; and I don't want Fanny unhappy at all. I'll go."

She insisted upon this; and Henry dreaded it. But there was no need of this dread. Mary was composed; she smiled; her voice was steady and serene. And though Shirley, and Mary Gallop, and every one else so disposed wept at Fanny's going, Mary did not cry.

Afterward—Mat and Fanny were married in the afternoon—Henry and Shirley and Mary went home together; and Mary sat down for a while on the sofa. Henry went to her and put his arm about her, yearning toward this sister of his. But Mary's broad, plump shoulders were steady; it was only the fact that they were still as stone which shook him so.

When it was time, she rose, and smiled again.

"Now I must put the baby to bed," she told them. And she took the little girl in her arms and started up the stair.

Hen, the pug, waddled devotedly at her heels.

XII

On the night before Henry's thirtieth birthday, he and Shirley went early to bed. Shirley had been somewhat concerned about Dan, who had come home from school with a cold and a faint fever; she was afraid he might be coming down with measles or the like, and Henry took pains to reassure her.

"He probably hasn't any fever, anyway," he urged good humoredly. "That's your imagination."

But Shirley said: "His head's hot. I went in to feel it, just now."

"Been playing too hard, and he's got a little cold, that's all," Henry insisted. "In the morning he'll be the same as ever and you'll laugh at yourself."

He had come to the room before her, while she went to tuck Dan in more securely for the night; but he had made no progress toward undressing. Henry was apt to be deliberate in his movements; and Shirley was grown accustomed to this trait of his and no longer rebelled at it. Now while she shook out her hair before the mirror he sat on the edge of the bed, forgetting the business of the moment while he talked to her. They had not hitherto spoken of his birthday, the next day; Shirley had kept silence because she wished him to think she had forgotten. She planned a party. Fred and Molly Cook and Will and Mary Gallop and some others were coming to supper, and there would be a cake with candles, and Dan and Cynt and even the baby were in the secret and had presents all devised. She hoped Henry would think she had forgotten, and come home at supper time to be surprised.

But he said now, sitting thoughtfully upon the bed, watching her stroke the brush slowly through her hair: "Tomorrow's my birthday, Shirley."

And she was disappointed, but decided to treat the matter

as of small account. "That's so, Henry. So it is. Well, what do you want for a birthday present?"

He smiled and shook his head. "Oh, nothing! Don't get anything for me." And she brushed her hair, and his eyes were dull with thought. "I'll be thirty years old," he said.

She began to braid her hair, making no comment.

"It seems like a long time," he said, half aloud. "Looking back. But I guess the next thirty years will go a lot faster. The years seem to go faster, all the time. Yet it seems as though I'd lived forever, already."

"You'd better get to bed, Henry," she suggested. "While you're talking."

He began slowly to unlace his shoes. Then rose and took off his coat and hung it on a chair—Shirley had labored to teach him neatness—and came back and sat down on the bed again. She was gone to brush her teeth; and when she returned he was still sitting there, absorbed in thought. And she said in mild impatience: "Get up and let me strip the bed, dear."

He rose obediently. "Wonder where we'll be thirty years from now," he murmured.

She smiled at him, gaily. "Wait and see," she urged. "You can't know by thinking about it now."

He said seriously, "Yes, but Hon, a man has to try to plan his life, move ahead, figure what he's going to do."

"I think the days more or less settle that as they come along," she told him, folding the spread away. And she laughed again. "If you don't hurry, you'll still be undressing thirty years from now. You're the slowest man."

He began again to unlace his shoes, puffing a little as he bent over. "I've got a lot I want to do," he said.

She refused to be too serious. "I hope we're not living in this house thirty years from now, anyway," she told him. "The walls will be bulging by that time. We're crowded now, and when the children get a little older they'll want rooms of their own."

He considered this. "There's a lot of building all around us," he commented. "I expect thirty years from now there won't be many houses left around here. Just stores and flats and things."

"I thought we'd have more room with Mary gone," she commented. "But of course she'll always be with us now."

"You don't mind, do you?" he urged.

Shirley, in bed by this time, shook her head from side to

side upon the pillow. "She's a dear soul," she said. "And she does so much for us. And even if she didn't, I couldn't bear to have her all alone, living by herself. She must always stay."

"They're building a block of little stores down across from Clem," Henry remarked, his thoughts straying. "I suppose they'll cut into his business."

"Yes," she agreed, and was a moment silent. "Yes, papa's getting old, too." She smiled to herself, and added: "When I was a little girl, I used to think I'd work in the store when I grew up. I loved being there. So many things to eat!"

"I used to think I'd be a blacksmith," Henry agreed. "I remember the way my father's place used to look, like a black cave, with the sparks flying, and horses like some kind of monsters in the shadow there, and the red light on my father's face. I can see it just as plain."

"Henry," she protested. "You haven't even got your shoes off yet."

He laughed, and removed them, but still sat on the foot of the bed. "I got over wanting to be a blacksmith, after I got to know Ben Harris," he remembered. "Funny, I knew George Nye before that; but I never wanted to work in a store the way he did. Never wanted to be like him. But I did want to be a reporter like Ben." He smiled. "I guess George wasn't a very heroic figure to a boy. But there was a lot to George, at that." His eyes clouded. "I wonder what he'd have done, how he'd have come out, if Mary had married him."

"She doesn't talk about him yet," Shirley commented.

He nodded. "I know. She's changed, hasn't she. She always used to cry so easy; there'd be tears in her eyes at the littlest thing. But she doesn't, now. I haven't seen her, anyway, since he died."

"I haven't either," Shirley agreed. Added thoughtfully: "I think she'd be—better if she did."

"Oh, she's happy," Henry insisted. "Taking care of the baby, and the dog. Mary's always happy if she's got someone to take care of." He chuckled. "I used to hate her taking care of me."

"I wish she'd taught you to get to bed faster," Shirley remarked, in mild exasperation. "You'd talk all night if I let you, Henry."

"Well," he urged, smilingly, "I like to visit with you, Hon. I like to sit and have a good talk with you. And if I come to bed you'll go to sleep. I know you."

"I've had a hard day," she said wistfully.

"Sure," he agreed. "All right, I'll get a move on." He made

a great show of haste for a while; stopped presently, leaning against the bureau. "It's funny the way a man's ideas change as he gets older," he commented. "First I wanted to be a blacksmith, and then I wanted to be a reporter. And then when Ben Harris put me in charge of the bicycle page I thought I was pretty good."

"You don't ride your bicycle any more," she remarked.

"Saving it for Dan," he told her, and smiled. "I don't know; I've lost interest in it. Since I went on the copy desk. You know, that's the place to learn things about the newspaper game, Hon. I've learned more since I've been there. There's a lot to it besides just writing the stories. They have to be edited, and have to have headlines; and then they have to be combined to make the pages. I'd like to be make-up man, some day. I go down into the composing room sometimes, now, to fix up a piece of copy or something, and that's mighty interesting, Shirley. You've got to know about that side of the work if you're going to be an editor." He added, diffidently: "I kind of feel as though I was getting somewhere, now."

"Bless your heart!" she said gently.

"Well," he told her, coloring with pleasure: "I want to, you know. I don't want to be just a—just a hired man all my life. I want to have responsibility and everything; and I've got to be ready for it, haven't I? You know, I would like to be an editor. A man like Ben Harris. A man like that can do a lot, just by the things he prints; make a lot of difference in the world. And he knows everything interesting that's going on. I don't just mean murders and things. But inventions, and science, and everything. And it's a big job, a big responsibility. A great editor has a lot more influence than the governor, say; because he stays longer in his job."

He added stubbornly: "A lot of people don't think much of reporters and editors and newspaper men; but I think it's a fine profession, for the right kind of a man. If a man wants to do the right thing."

She said gently: "The right thing for you to do is to come to bed, Henry, and let your Shirley get to sleep." Saw the hurt in his eyes and added quickly: "But I don't mean to make fun of you. I do know what you mean; and I think your ideals are fine. You're such a fine man, Henry. Only my job is smaller; just keeping things going at home, and keeping the children well."

He protested proudly: "I guess I wouldn't amount to much without you. I'd probably be like Marty Bull, or Jimmy

Horn." Added generously: "Of course, Marty's a fine reporter. But he's not married, and he's kind of coarse sometimes. But he is a good reporter."

She shook her head fondly. "You'd never be like him. You're too fine, Henry."

"Well, I guess that's because you got hold of me," he declared. "I guess the best thing ever happened to me was getting you. And now we own our home, and our children are growing up; and I think I'm getting ahead, Shirley. and everything's kind of smoothing out ahead of us."

He was in his night shirt by this time, and looked uncertainly toward the gas; but she reminded him. "You've forgotten your teeth, Henry." And he went off abstractedly to attend to them. She lay thinking of him fondly; elaborated upon the plans for his surprise party the next day.

"And there's no reason why he shouldn't be editor, some day," she told herself loyally.

When he came back it was to ask: "You think we'll ever hear from Harry Coster again, Shirley? Think he'll ever come back?"

She shook her head. "No. I don't think he'd dare. Unless he wanted to get more money. And papa hasn't any more to give him, I guess. No, he won't come back."

"I'll bet if he came back and was sick or something, Mary'd go and take care of him," Henry declared. "I'll bet she would."

"I expect so," she agreed; and as he turned out the gas and raised the windows, she warned: "Don't forget to pin the curtains back, Henry. The wind blows them so. There are pins on my bureau, in the little tray."

He chuckled in the darkness. "Golly, you're patient, Hon! I guess you have to tell me that every night, don't you."

"I'd do it myself if you'd get to bed before me, once in a while," Shirley said.

"Oh, I don't mind doing it," he assured her.

And presently lay down beside her; and for a while neither of them spoke; and then Shirley said drowsily:

"Kiss me good night, dear. I'm so sleepy."

He held her close a moment; held her in his arms then, her head upon his shoulder, while she drowsed.

By and by he said: "Dave's book is going to be published next spring, they think now. I've got to finish 'I Speak of Africa.' I've got more free time to think about it now."

"Yes, dear," she murmured, half asleep; and he smiled in

the darkness and held her close till his arm beneath her head ached with pain. When he drew it out she did not rouse; he lay a while longer, eyes wide, watching the shadows flickering on the ceiling, thinking of the past and of the years ahead.

He was thirty years old and life was slipping past him; he must be about his business in the world.

PART IV

THE FATHER

I

Life is but the acceptance of responsibilities or their evasion; it is a business of meeting obligations or avoiding them. To every man the choice is continually being offered; and by the manner of his choosing, you may fairly measure him. As to many matters there are many opinions possible, but as to this one, there can be no dispute: that it is the proper business of a man to do the best he knows and the best he can; and that failing in this, he fails in everything.

Henry Beeker's perception of this was never very clear; was never a conscious understanding. When he married Shirley, he appreciated only vaguely the fact that she was thereafter to be his charge and burden. He had known that he would be nominally responsible for her actual sustenance; but even in this respect there was Clem Prior in the background, with a house to rent below its proper figure, and groceries to sell at cost; and there was Mrs. Prior to come and tend them all. When he had some doubt of his own abilities, he found comfort in the thought that if he failed, Clem and Mrs. Prior were always there.

But by slow degrees, and without his perceiving the change, the load had transferred itself to his shoulders. Shirley, he found, depended on him wholly; and not only for her food and lodging, but for the less tangible things of life. If she were ill, he must attend her; if she were moody, he must be cheerful for them both; if she were sad, he must make her gay again; and if in any walk of life she sought to lean upon his strength, he must offer a firm arm to support her. Shirley, too, meant children; and these children were new responsibilities, not only in the present, but in the future as well. College, for example; that must be provided for. It was not only necessary to see that these children of his were housed and fed; but also he must take some thought to the years when they should have left their infancy behind; and to their adolescence, and even to their eventual and remote maturity. So first Shirley, and then the babies, laid their weight upon

him; and by and by he had to take Mary into his household, where though she paid her way in labor done, she was also another whom he must comfort and whose griefs he must assuage.

Just as these folk depended upon the cash income which week by week he was able to bring home from the outside world, so too did they depend upon his manhood for counsel and guidance and strength. And when Mrs. Prior sickened and presently died, Clem began to lean on Henry as these others did. For Clem was growing old, his powers a little slackening. . . .

The estate of a husband is not of necessity greatly different from that of a lover; it looks solely to the present, to the happinesses of the day. What is to come is forgotten in the delightful savor of what is. The husband may be merely the companion in an equal partnership; but the father must sustain not only his wife, but his children and those others who depend upon him.

Shirley had of late sometimes remarked to herself that Henry's shoulders were a little bowed. It was the outward change in him which marked his assumption of the burdens of paternity.

II

During the winter following Henry's thirtieth birthday, Clem Prior went into involuntary bankruptcy. This calamity had been in prospect for some time, but although Clem must have known it, he kept a close mouth, and without appealing to Henry for help supinely accepted the successive blows which brought about his business destruction. Even if he had appealed to Henry, there was nothing that either Henry or Shirley could have done. They had neither of them any particular business sense, and their means were not sufficient to let them render any tangible aid. Yet when the blow did fall, Henry unreasonably enough resented the fact that Clem had not appealed to him, and expressed this resentment to Shirley. She said protestingly:

"But I know father did everything he could, Henry; and there wasn't anything we could have done."

"I might have thought of something," Henry protested. "The trouble is, Shirley, your father is getting old and losing his grip on things. I don't know anything about business, but I could at least have stopped him before he went so far."

She said grievingly: "This is almost going to kill father."

But he reassured her. "These things are never as bad as they seem, Shirley," he insisted. "I know it seems terrible and I know it will be pretty hard for Clem. But I went down to the store today, and he's got a good stock of stuff there and it's in fine condition, and the chances are when that's sold and everything's straightened out he'll be square with the world."

"It will take everything," Shirley said sorrowfully.

"I don't think Clem will mind that," Henry assured her. "So long as he can square up. He's been in business so long and his reputation has always been the best. If I know him as well as I think I do, he's worrying a lot more about that than he is about himself right now."

"Oh, he is! He is!" she agreed. "I know that, too. I hope we can do something to straighten him out, Henry."

Henry hoped so too, for Shirley's sake if not for Clem's. When she was unhappy, he was necessarily unhappy with her. Upon her smiles it sometimes seemed to him his very life depended. In this emergency he might wisely have consulted David Pell or Ben Harris or some other man of wider acquaintance, but Henry was reluctant to expose his father-in-law's situation to the world. He turned instead to Cy Malgrave, and the attorney heard him with that habitual smile which was his characteristic; and when Henry was done, said reassuringly:

"You leave it to me, Henry. I'll take charge and see that everything is in order."

"What we want," Henry explained, "is for Clem to come out of it clean."

Malgrave nodded, and to Henry's faint distress, winked at him. "Sure you do," he agreed. "You leave it to me. I'll see that it's fixed."

What followed, a matter of weeks, was never very clear to Henry. He had no knowledge of finance nor of the intricacies of the bankruptcy law. He knew only that Clem eventually emerged with his debts wiped off the books, himself left without a penny. His store was gone, and the little block in

which it had been housed and which Clem owned, and his house, went too.

Clem himself submitted to that which went forward with a dull humility. Almost his only comment was to say one day to Henry:

"That money I lent your brother-in-law would have stopped this, son."

Henry felt and resented the implied reproach; but he was too full of pity for Clem to say what was in his mind.

So Clem was left an old man stripped of all that he possessed; and he, and Henry too, had to accept sympathetic comment from their friends. Ben Harris saw an account of the court procedure in the routine bulletin from the Federal Building; and though he kept it out of the paper, he spoke of it to Henry, sympathetically. "It's tough on the old man, isn't it, Hank?" he said.

"He's in bad shape," Henry agreed. "You'd think he was eighty years old."

"How old is he?" Ben asked. "Sixty-five?"

"He's only about fifty-five," Henry explained. "But since Mrs. Prior died, he's gone to pieces pretty fast; and he was always gray."

"What's he going to do?" Harris asked.

"Well," said Henry thoughtfully, "I suppose he'll have to come and live at our house now."

2

The house had long been too small for them. When they expected Mary would marry George Nye, they counted upon her departure to give them the room they required. But now George was dead and Mary would always be with them, and Clem supinely added himself to Henry's other responsibilities. Henry felt this burden more and more keenly, and during the dragging months from the first of the year to the coming of summer he had hours when it seemed to him impossible to go on in this dull and plodding way. He and Shirley had taken the two little girls into their own bed room. Cynthia slept on a cot; three year old Mary on a pallet spread upon the floor at the foot of their bed. Dan shared Mary's room, and Clem had the other bed room. The little house, which had seemed so ample and commodious when Henry and Shirley lived in it alone, was filled to bursting now, and life was a succession of petty inconveniences.

During these months Henry did some desultory writing on his novel; but there was no chance for solitude at home and no other place where he could work, so that it progressed slowly and haltingly, and left him all unsatisfied. In the office, his work on the copy desk, the revision and editing of stories other men had written, required little thought. His pencil ran swiftly down the columns, cutting out a word or a sentence here and there; uniting the fragments that remained with conjunctions or connecting phrases. He wrote the necessary headlines and crossheads with an instinct born of experience, knew without counting the letters when a line was too short or too long. The work was automatic, engaging only half his mind.

During the later spring the paper began to feel the effects of a certain business depression, and some of the newer faces on the staff disappeared. But though he thus curtailed expenses, Ben Harris at the same time fought to hold and increase his circulation by initiating new departures. Halftone cuts began to be used almost daily, and though these were at first made by a nearby engraver, Harris at length persuaded the owners of the *Tribune* to install an engraving department. It was housed next door to the city room; and the smell of the acids there was added to the odors of stale ink and dust and tobacco and disinfectant which had always filled the poorly ventilated place.

Henry saw during these months as much as he could of David Pell. He fell into the habit of having dinner with Pell occasionally and going afterwards to the other man's rooms on Beacon Hill. He had begun to dread going home. The children were noisy, Shirley was tired, Mary moved through life with a stony countenance inured to grief and sorrow, and Clem sat dumbly smoking his pipe in that curiously precise fashion which had always been his habit and which was become maddening to Henry now. In David's company he had some surcease from the monotony which was his life at home, and sometimes the two friends talked together and sometimes Henry took one of David's books from the shelves and read the evening through while David read or worked at his desk.

Pell's first novel had been published and was having a slow but steady sale. He was engaged upon a second, and Henry was permitted sometimes to read the manuscript. Pell appeared to enjoy discussing its development with the other man. But Henry could not spend every evening thus. Usually he went home on laggard feet and submitted to that which

waited for him there. Shirley felt the burden of life as keenly as did he. It tired her, left her irritable with fatigue; and she and Henry, when they were alone together, sometimes quarrelled over inconsequential matters and with a stubborn bitterness. As spring began to break the bonds of winter, Henry planned to make his usual garden, but he had no enthusiasm for the work this year; and it was easier as the evenings grew longer to drop in on some one in the neighborhood.

This circle of his friends was narrowing. Toward Cy Malgrave, who had arranged for Mary's divorce and who had had charge of Clem's bankruptcy proceedings, Henry felt more and more definitely a curious resentment and distrust. He had no pleasure in Malgrave's company now, and Shirley agreed with him in this. She disliked the man's insistent smile, and particularly she disliked ten-year-old Kit Malgrave, who liked to come and play tolerantly with Dan and Cynthia. Shirley thought Kit was a prig and a bully.

"But I can't tell her to stay at home," she confessed to Henry. "Or the Malgraves will be hurt; and after all, Cy has done a lot for us."

"Let them be hurt," Henry retorted. "He's been paid for everything he's done."

"You can't quarrel with your neighbors," Shirley insisted, and she and Henry had from this small beginning one of their recurrent arguments.

Fred Cook had lived nearby, and he and Henry were congenial; but in May, Cook moved to Newton Centre, and Henry no longer saw him except at the office during the day. It seemed to Henry during these months that the new century from which such great things had been expected was proving a disappointment. He found himself unable to join in the popular enthusiasm for the achievements of Brigadier General Funston. He felt only a cynical satisfaction when Queen Victoria died; and even the formulation of the United States Steel Corporation in March, coming as a climax to the trust movement which had been an outstanding industrial phenomenon of the preceding decade, failed to stir his imagination. He was in a mood of persistent discontent, and when in the early summer he began to look forward to his vacation, it was without any lively anticipation. David Pell asked him one day what he meant to do, and he said morosely:

"Stay at home, I guess. I haven't thought anything about it."

"You ought to go away somewhere," David urged. "You and Shirley take a trip together. You've been sticking too close to things, Henry. You need a change."

Henry said to this that he had nowhere to go. Nevertheless Pell's suggestion lingered in his mind. He was to have the last two weeks in August, but when the month began, he had not yet arrived at any plan. A letter from young Mat Prior in Detroit, suggesting that he and Shirley come out and visit them for a week, vaguely attracted him. He suggested to Shirley that they might accept this invitation.

"But we can't afford it," Shirley retorted.

Henry said resentfully: "That's what you always say, Shirley. To hear you talk, we can't afford anything. I guess I'm earning as much money as most men my age; and if I'm not, I'm doing the best I can, and you ought not to throw it up to me."

She protested gently, "But Henry, I'm not throwing it up to you. Only we have to be sensible."

"I get tired of being sensible sometimes," he reminded her, in a morose tone. "I've always been sensible, and I'm kind of sick of it."

She touched his arm lightly with her hand. "I know it's hard for you, Henry," she agreed. "You have so much to carry all the time. I'm sorry. If you hadn't married me, you'd be a lot better off, I expect."

This seemed to him so unreasonable that he answered her angrily. "That's the trouble with you," he said. "I can't talk to you about anything without your applying it personally. I'm not kicking, am I?"

"No," she agreed. "But I can see so plainly that if you didn't have us, you'd be free."

"If I didn't have you, I'd have someone else," he told her.

"Probably I ought to manage better," Shirley confessed miserably. "Only I do the best I can."

"Oh, for heaven's sake!" Henry cried. "Don't talk like that!"

"I really haven't much to do," Shirley insisted. "Mary's such a help. Yet I'm tired, it seems to me, all the time."

"That's because your father's here all the time," Henry pointed out. "He just expects to be waited on. He's just let go all holds since he lost the store. I don't see why he has to sit around the house all day. He might do something."

"I know," Shirley agreed. "I'm a load on you, and the children and my father just make it worse."

There was no conceivable end to such a discussion as this. They could only talk themselves to sleep, each one full of hurt and bitterness. But in the end they decided, or at least Henry decided and Shirley reluctantly agreed with him, that they would accept Mat's invitation and go to Detroit after all.

3

Fanny and Mat were to have a baby in December. Henry and Shirley had known this since Fanny wrote to her sister, and Mary Gallop came to tell Shirley the news. Mary was still childless, and that fact was a bitter cross to her. When they had read Fanny's letter together, she wept on Shirley's shoulder.

"She's always had everything I wanted," Mary said pitifully. "Ever since we were little girls. I've been disappointed so many times, and it just seems to me Fanny's never had a disappointment in her life."

"You've got Will," Shirley reminded her, and Henry, who was with them, said:

"Yes! For goodness' sake, don't let Will hear you talk like that."

"Oh, I wouldn't," Mary assured them. "And Will is good to me. But he feels the same as I do. He wants babies too."

"You ought to go out and see Fanny," Shirley urged. "You ought to plan to go out next fall and stay with her until the baby comes."

"We can't both go," Mary pointed out. "And if I did go alone, there'd be no one to take care of Will."

When Shirley and Henry now decided to go to Detroit, Mary tired to conceal from them the envy which she could not but feel. She came to help Shirley with her sewing, and the two worked at top speed, with Henry's sister helping them. Mary's eyes, always weak, were failing her. She was no longer able to do fine needlework; but she had an aptitude at cutting out by pattern, at basting and fitting, and she was more skillful than either of the other two when it came to pressing out the completed garments. Skirts that year were full, adorned with countless ruffles and tucks, and Mary's iron was busy every afternoon.

As the time approached for their departure, Henry began

to feel a quickening pulse and to taste the joys of anticipation. Shirley urged him to buy a new suit, but he insisted that this was not necessary, and in one of those moods of fondness which had of late been rare with him, he said tenderly:

"Nobody's going to pay any attention to me so long as they have you to look at, Shirley."

She could not fail to be pleased at this, flushed a little with her pleasure and bent to kiss him. Yet she insisted, too. In the end he compromised by buying a new hat, and they set out at last upon this first trip they had taken together. Shirley said goodby to the children in a rapture of tears, hugging them close and desperately.

"You will take good care of them, won't you, Mary?" she begged, and Henry's sister said calmly:

"Of course I will. That's what I'm here for. Don't you have a thought about them, Shirley."

"Oh, I know they'll be all right with you," Shirley agreed. "But I've never left them before, and I can't help worrying."

"That's foolish," Henry told her. "You know it is. Mary can take care of them as well as you can."

"Dan's such a big boy now," Shirley pointed out. "And he's so independent since he started in school. He's all over the neighborhood. Something might happen to him."

"You can't keep him in the yard all the time," Henry reminded her. "He's got to stand on his own feet more or less."

"But he's so little, Henry," Shirley insisted.

"He doesn't feel little," Henry laughed. "Do you, Dan?"

Dan, thus directly appealed to, said stoutly: "Now, mama, you stop crying. I'll take care of everybody."

Cynthia was as composed as Dan during these farewells, but three-year-old Mary caught the infection of her mother's tears; and when at last they left the house it was to the tune of her screams of grief, so that Henry had almost to compel Shirley away.

"She'll be all right as soon as we're gone," he insisted. "She'll be as happy as ever in a little while."

"She won't forget us, will she?" Shirley begged, and he said stoutly:

"Of course not. We'll be back in two weeks, Shirley. You act as if we were going away for good."

She said grievingly, "I know I'm silly. I suppose it's because I'm not used to leaving them."

"It's time you got used to it," Henry told her, lovingly.

"You and I have been sticking too close to home, Shirley. We've got to do more of this sort of thing. After this, we better take a trip every year."

"Oh, I don't think I can ever do it again," Shirley told him.

But when they were once on the train and under way, she somewhat forgot her grief and her fears in the succession of new experiences which crowded fast upon them. They had decided to go by stages and to see something of the world on the way. David Pell some years before had visited Niagara Falls, when the paper sent him west on a political story; and his description of that gigantic spectacle had remained in Henry's mind. By Pell's advice they now stopped off there; and Shirley was fairly breathless at the wonder of the sight, while Henry delighted in her delight. He felt this day as though he had recaptured the Shirley of ten years before, as though the intervening time had been wiped out and they were sweethearts together again.

"We ought to have come here on our wedding trip, Shirley," he told her. "But this is the next best thing, isn't it?"

"It's like a honeymoon," she agreed, and clung closely to his arm.

The rest of the journey they made, delightfully, by boat; and in Detroit, where Mat took them in his charge and commanded all their movements, their days were filled with wonders. Mat and Fanny had a pleasant house not far from the factory where Mat was employed, and Mat had his own automobile. When Henry commented on its excellences, Mat said loftily:

"That's because you don't know much about them, Henry. This is a pretty crude machine compared to what we're going to have. We're making a lot of changes every year. I tell you, a few years from now you'll see them in place of horses everywhere. Five years from now they'll be making ten thousand a year in this country."

"I guess they won't make that many for more than a year or two," Henry predicted. "There aren't a great many people who can afford to own one."

"They don't cost as much as you'd think, to run," Mat pointed out. "Of course, this is one that the company lets me have, because I'm working on it all the time. But I couldn't afford to run it and pay the expenses of it if it wasn't pretty cheap. They'll make them by and by so cheap that you'll be able to buy one yourself, Henry."

Henry laughed. "You always were pretty enthusiastic about them, Mat," he agreed. "But I don't think I'd ever own one if they were giving them away. I'm no engineer."

And that provoked from Mat another defense of this machine that was the chief preoccupation of his days.

Henry spent most of his time with Mat, and the younger man took him through the factory and showed him the processes of manufacture there. But Shirley preferred to stay quietly with Fanny, and the two had long hours together, the younger woman full of doubts and questionings, draining Shirley of all the lore of motherhood. Shirley told Henry one night:

"She's just the way I was before Dan was born—terribly frightened, and yet trying not to let Mat see."

And Henry, preparing for bed with that slow deliberation which was always so maddening to Shirley, said philosophically: "I suppose that's always the way. Mat's scared, too. He spoke about it to me today, and I told him it wasn't anything. I said, 'Here, there are babies being born in the world all the time, and nobody any the worse for it!' "

"But, of course," Shirley urged, "that sort of thing is all very well for other people, but it doesn't help any if your particular wife is the one that's going to have the baby." And she added, because she could never control her impatience with Henry's deliberate way:

"Do take off your other shoe!"

He obeyed without comment. "They've got a good doctor," he said. "I went with Mat today to see him. Mat had an idea that things weren't going all right and that the doctor was keeping something from him. You don't need to worry about them, Shirley. This man knows his business."

"Oh, I'm not worried about them," Shirley assured him. "I know things always do go along all right, and Mat and Fanny are the sort that always come out on top anyway. I think Mat's going to be a wealthy man some day."

Henry shook his head. "He hasn't any sense of proportion," he protested. "He's got just this one enthusiasm."

"Well," Shirley said gently. "Every man has his dreams, Henry."

When he was ready at last to join her in bed, he turned out the light and began to adjust the shades. "This electric light is a pretty good thing, isn't it?" he remarked. "I'll be glad when we can have it."

"It's better than gas," she agreed. "You don't get the same

smell from it, and the light is pleasanter to read by." And she added before they went to sleep, half to herself: "Aren't we having a good time?"

"Glad we came?" he countered.

"Of course I am," she told him. "I wanted to, all the time, only I didn't want you to feel you had to spend the money."

"Pshaw!" he said. "I guess we can afford it. It's been worth it to me. Hasn't it to you?"

"Yes," she agreed. But she added, a little later: "I can't help wondering, though, if the children are all right."

"All right?" Henry repeated. "Why wouldn't they be?"

"It's so hot," Shirley told him. "It must be hot in Boston, too."

"Don't worry," Henry insisted. "Mary will keep them cool."

But the next moning, while they were at breakfast, a messenger boy came to the house with a telegram for Henry, and Shirley, pale with alarm at its coming, clung to his arm while he ripped open the envelope.

"What is it, Henry? What is it, Henry?" she begged.

He laughed at her, a little impatiently. "Nothing," he assured her. "Don't be foolish! What could it be?"

But by that time he had unfolded the sheet of yellow paper, and his throat was suddenly hot and dry; for the telegram was from his sister.

"Mary is sick," it read. "You better come home right away."

4

Neither Henry nor Shirley slept that night upon the train, except for brief tormented intervals; and Shirley was so stricken with grievous fears that she was at moments like a mad woman. Henry, as full of terror as she, had nevertheless to affect for her sake a certain confidence and philosophy.

"Mary just didn't want the responsibility," he urged. "She just wants us to be there to take charge."

"She wouldn't have telegraphed us," Shirley insisted, "unless it was terrible. Maybe my baby is already dead, Henry."

Henry said angrily, "Don't be foolish, Shirley. You're always expecting the worst. There's no sense in acting that way."

"But she's my baby!" Shirley cried.

"Well, she's mine too, for that matter," Henry pointed out. "But babies have been sick before."

"Oh, but I know Mary wouldn't have telegraphed unless she was going to die," Shirley wailed, and Henry said:

"Shucks! I've seen Mary scared to death over little things before this. You don't want to take her too seriously. Probably the baby's all right by now. Probably she just had an upset stomach or something, and Mary got scared. You see," he added, "Mary has gotten so used to having things go wrong with her that she's always sure something is going to happen."

"She wasn't worried when we came away," Shirley pointed out. "She said everything would be all right. She said it was all right for us to come."

"Well, it was all right for us to come," Henry insisted. "It would have been just the same if we were there, anyway." And Shirley seized on that, and cried that Henry was trying to prepare her for the worst; and he had to begin all over again the task of soothing her.

They would reach Boston at noon, and the hours from daylight on were an interminable agony. Henry learned to forget his own fears while he lied to comfort Shirley; and she seized pitifully upon these untruths and found in them new cause for terror. He reminded her that Mary was always desperately worried over any stomach trouble. "If she has a stomach ache herself," he pointed out, "she thinks she's going to die." And he added plausibly, "Probably that's because George died that way."

And Shirley cried, "Oh, do you think the baby has the same thing, Henry?"

So Henry had to work to recapture the ground he had lost. He tried to distract Shirley's attention by calling upon her to look out at the countryside through which they passed. He tried to make her take pleasure in the beauty of the Berkshire Hills; and when they came to Worcester, he remembered an assignment which had once brought him to that city, and told her the tale. But she only said when he was done:

"How long till we'll be home?"

In Framingham, he recalled that it was here Sam Russell lived, but Shirley could only remember that one of Sam's babies had died. When they saw on either side of the train the more numerous houses and the occasional suburban stations which warned them they were approaching the city, they relapsed into silence, each of them now so full of terror that they could find no words either of complaint or comfort. Henry was exhausted by his efforts to sustain Shirley, and Shir-

ley by her own fears had been brought to such a point that even the worst would be a relief after her long uncertainty.

Thus when they alighted from the train at the station and saw Clem Prior waiting for them there, it was Shirley who was in some respects the more controlled of the two. Shirley went steadily toward her father, while Henry lagged behind, looking desperately this way and that as though in this moment he sought to find some escape from that which confronted him. Shirley had time for a word with her father before Henry came up to them; and when Henry reached her side, and she turned to her husband, her eyes were swimming not so much with grief as with a great and maternal tenderness for Henry. She said quietly:

"She died this morning, Henry."

And when Henry stood still, unable to move, shuddering a little as though he had been struck a physical blow, Shirley took her husband in her arms.

III

Yet after that moment at the station, Henry somehow found the strength necessary to carry him through the days that followed; and this was well, for upon his shoulders devolved the burden not only of his own grief, but of the sorrows of these others. When he and Clem and Shirley got to the house, they found even Dan and Cynthia oppressed by the shadow which abode there, and Shirley had to forget herself and devote all her love and tenderness to them. Henry, on his part, was forced to meet the desperate and stony despair of his sister.

To Mary, the little girl who bore her name had been dearer than the other children were. Since George Nye's death, her life and her affections had centered more and more closely upon her namesake, and that this which had occurred should have come to pass while the children were in her care shattered for the time all of Mary's philosophy. She had learned, perforce, to endure long sorrow and to meet with some composure the keenest blows which life could strike her, but she was not hardened to this.

"It was a hot day," she told Henry and Shirley, in a tone so monotonous that it was like a cry of pain. "And I thought the children would like some frozen custard, so I made some for them, and Mary took sick out of it."

Henry saw that which was in her mind, and he said gravely: "If we'd been here, Mary, it would have been just the same."

"I did it," Mary insisted. "They didn't ask for it. I did it on my own account."

"You mustn't think that sort of thing," Henry urged. "You took care of them the best you knew how. We couldn't have done any better."

"I'd ought to have known how to do better," Mary protested, but Henry, discovering in this hour the germ of a philosophy which would comfort him many times thereafter, said gently:

"That's not so, Mary. About all anybody can do in this world is the best they know how. If you do that, no one can blame you."

He took care during the days succeeding to be much with her. He thought in an impersonal way that it was a sorrowful thing to see Mary, upon whose strength he had for so many years been used to lean, thus crushed and broken by this final blow. After the first impact, his own emotions were somewhat dulled, as though pain brought its anodyne; and he could look upon and seek to relieve Mary's sorrow in a fashion almost disinterested.

Clem Prior, Henry found at this time vaguely irritating. Clem was by his own misfortunes prematurely aged, and life had taught him a certain philosophy which he called a Christian resignation. He had always been regular in his attendance at church, as for that matter Henry and Shirley were; but while with them these observances were merely a pleasant and companionable part of the relaxation which each Sunday brought, the church had assumed an increasingly large place in Clem's life. He bade them now bear this blow bravely, because it was, as all things were, the will of God. And when the evening after the long and hideous torment of the funeral Shirley lost herself for a while in a healing and purging passion of grief, Clem chided her for weeping.

"We must learn," he said unctuously, "to accept what God bestows with due humility."

Henry was able to refrain from uttering the words which sprang to his lips, but he thought Clem an annoying old man. It had not yet become apparent to them all that Clem would

live out his life under their roof. It was still tacitly assumed that when he should have somewhat recovered from the blow to his courage and his resolution which his failure had inflicted, he would seek out for himself a new activity, would begin the business of finding some way to occupy his days. But Clem was of a generation which had learned to look forward to old age with resignation. A man at sixty was old; was entitled, so long as there were hands strong enough to support him, to take his ease, to rest in a comfortable chair, and to expound life to those younger than himself and therefore in the very nature of things less fitted to comprehend it. Also, he remembered his grievance against Henry, and let Henry see that he remembered. Henry did not particularly care. He understood only that Clem was in these days of their grief something like a counter irritant, and he found in his resentment at the older man's attitude some relief from his own preoccupations.

He was surprised and saddened to discover how quickly after the baby's death their life settled into its accustomed ways. Removed from them by so short a space of time, she was at the same time incredibly remote. He and Shirley spoke of this one night together. Shirley, as conscious of it as Henry was, asked pitifully:

"Do you think we'll ever forget her, Henry? Sometimes I feel as though I should think of her every minute of my life, and then again it's almost as though we had never had a baby at all."

Henry found somehow the wisdom to reply. He shook his head and smiled comfortingly. "We won't forget her, Shirley," he told his wife. "It's really, in a way, beautiful that it should have happened so. She was so dear and so sweet, and everything she did made us laugh at her so tenderly; and now she is always going to be to us just as she was. Dan and Cynthia are going to keep on changing. Five or ten years from now we'll hardly be able to think of them as babies at all. we'll see them as they are then, and we'll remember the baby things they did; but when we try to picture them we won't be able to do it. Probably we'll be worried about them sometimes, and unhappy about the things they do. Probably they'll argue with us and disobey us and do things to make us miserable, and maybe we'll quarrel. But we'll always have Mary as she was, as a beautiful baby to go on through life with us, trotting along at our heels. Always just as ready to laugh at

us, when we make fools of ourselves for her, as she used to be."

Shirley said nothing, but lay quiet in his arms, and his cheek against hers was wet with her tears.

"That's one thing about dying," he said again, after a moment. "It immortalizes a person on the spot. As long as you're alive, you keep changing, but just as soon as you're dead, you're fixed in that particular form in the memories of everyone who knew you. You're immortal in their memories, Shirley, just as Mary will always be with us."

He was so interested in his own thoughts, in this idea which he had formulated, that he felt a curious elation and pride like that of a discoverer; and he was immensely proud of the fact that he was able thus to comfort Shirley so that she fell asleep. But after she was asleep in his arms he began to be more and more lonely, and he was not able to comfort himself as he had her.

After a day or two, his emotions, which had been numbed and unresponsive under the first impact of grief, began to come to life again; and although he had of necessity to maintain for Shirley's sake and for his sister's a certain cheerful and cheering countenance, his own heart was empty and forlorn.

Mercifully, a little more than a week after their return, word came of the shooting of President McKinley, and Henry's attention, like that of the rest of the country, centered upon the question of whether the wounded man would live or die. He found some relief from his private sorrow in this public calamity.

2

On the day when McKinley died and Roosevelt assumed the presidency, Henry and David Pell, as it happened, had lunch together. David had come to the office to handle the story. He had written or rewritten the telegraphic dispatches, and he and Ben Harris had consulted together in planning the supplementary columns with which the *Tribune* that day was filled. When they were at lunch, David relaxed a little in his chair, and Henry saw that the other was tired and drawn.

"Did you get any sleep last night?" he asked, and Pell shook his head.

"Not to amount to anything," he confessed. "I was here

most of the night." And he added, with a smile at Henry: "Well, your friend T. R. is president."

Henry had never seen McKinley, and while he felt a formal grief for the tragedy, he had secretly a certain satisfaction in it, since it elevated Roosevelt to the position of chief executive. "Of course I'm sorry," he confessed. "But I think Roosevelt will be a great president."

"You remember we had a talk about it, two or three years ago?" Pell asked reminiscently. "I told you Roosevelt was born under a lucky star?"

"I don't think I do," Henry confessed. "I remember we talked about it."

"I had something like a premonition that day," Pell declared. "I wouldn't have bet a dollar that McKinley would live out his term." And he added thoughtfully, "You remember Senator Lodge urged Roosevelt to take the vice-presidency, when everybody else thought it meant the end of Teddy. Lodge had Roosevelt's interests at heart. It's almost as though he, too, guessed what was going to happen."

Henry considered this for a moment, and then he laughed. "You've got too much imagination, Dave," he said good humoredly, and Pell smiled in agreement.

"No doubt I have," he assented. "But it's curious the way things work out sometimes." And after a little he added diffidently: "Henry, I haven't had a chance to see you since your little girl died. You know how sorry I am for you and Shirley."

"Oh, yes," Henry murmured.

"Shirley all right, is she, now?" David inquired.

"Yes," said Henry. "Yes, we've got our feet on the ground again."

They were silent a moment longer, and then Pell returned to the topic uppermost in his mind. "I wonder what Roosevelt will do about the Philippines," he remarked, half to himself. "He's naturally an expansionist, I think."

"But he's a practical man, too," Henry urged. "And expansion is a national liability."

Pell smiled. "I don't think Teddy is one to dodge liability or responsibility," he suggested.

"That's so," Henry agreed.

"He's got a bigger problem to tackle at home," Pell remarked. "This trust situation. There's no telling where it'll end unless it's handled strongly." He pushed back his chair. "I've got to get back, Henry," he said. "I think I'll talk to Ben about

that. Tell him to have Pat get something about it in Washington if he can." And the two friends went back to the *Tribune* office together.

When Henry sat down in his chair, Peter Fly, who was the head of the copy desk at the time, tossed across to him three or four sheets of manuscript, with instructions as to headlines; and Henry plunged into the routine work again. His hours were now more regular than they had been when he was charged with handling the bicycle news. It had then been necessary for him to go where his material was, and as often as not he had come to the office in the evening to write. his copy. Now he was free at five o'clock in the afternoon, free to go home. He would have preferred to work harder, felt sometimes that he was making no progress; but he had not yet ventured to suggest this to Ben Harris, for fear of what Ben might do. Henry was beginning to lose the elasticity of youth. There had been a time when he contemplated the possibility of resigning from the *Tribune* if he should ever disapprove Ben's methods as editor. Harris, with greater responsibilities, was steadily becoming more conservative; and he had never asked Henry to do anything objectionable. But if Harris had done so, Henry was no longer young enough to think of open revolt. This office had been for so long the center of his days and the source from which his life was drawn that he would have been lost in any other surroundings. When now and then Harris discharged this man or that, Henry was learning to feel a momentary qualm of terror lest this should be his portion in the end; and he wondered sometimes, a little desperately, what he would do if he were discharged. There were so many dependent on him now.

3

This fall it was Cynthia's turn to start to school, but Henry and Shirley went through no such crisis of doubts and fears as they had in the case of Dan. They were become habituated to the routine of parenthood; had learned to accept the fact that their children were no longer babies. Shirley took Cynthia for her first day in Miss Hender's class without any particular preparation, and without consultation with Henry. He knew that Cynthia was to go, but this was presented to him as a fact and not as a problem to be decided.

That fall, his imaginative interest in life, somewhat dulled for a time, began to revive. To find surcease from his own

thoughts he was reading, not only the newspapers, but the current fiction. His old pleasure in "Richard Carvel" led him to buy "The Crisis." David Pell's recommendation introduced him to "The Right of Way," and he borrowed "Beverly of Graustark" from Fred Cook. This reading awakened in him a vaguely stirring desire to go back to work upon that novel which had in the past occupied so much of his own time. In December he did get out the disorderly manuscript and begin to reread it, to discover whether it deserved any further effort on his part. There were some two hundred pages, and he read them through as he read the manuscript of stories which came to his desk in the office, pencil in hand, amending, eliding, and expanding. He was surprised to find himself, before he was done, keenly interested.

"I didn't realize," he told Shirley, "how good it was. It's darned good. I'll bet if I go ahead and finish it, somebody'll be glad to publish it. We'll make a lot of money out of it yet."

Shirley smiled thoughtfully. "Papa was talking to me today," she said. "You know he still expects Harry Coster'll come back from the Klondike with a trunk full of gold."

Henry looked at her quickly. He had never told Shirley her father's resentment of Mary's divorce. "He'll have quite a wait," he said carefully.

"I'm afraid so," Shirley agreed. She added apologetically, "You see, I told papa he ought not to sit around the house all day. I told him he could probably get a job clerking in a grocery store, anyway, and that he'd be happier doing something."

"What'd he say?" Henry asked, and there was an edge of irritation in his tone.

Shirley made a weary gesture. "He said he'd learned to trust in the Lord," she confessed. "And he said that there was no use in his going to work as long as he had Harry Coster to rely on."

Henry understood that Clem had spoken in satiric vein; but he saw that Shirley did not guess this, so he held his peace. Much as he resented Clem's presence in his home, he was careful not to express this feeling to Shirley. There was, after all, nothing to be done about it. They could not turn Clem out unless he wished to go, and since the situation could not be remedied, Henry was willing to avoid causing Shirley any unnecessary unhappiness about her father. He changed the subject now.

"Fred Cook spoke to me today," he said. "He wants us to

come out to dinner Thursday night next week. He and Molly are mighty pleased with their new house out there."

"Why, I think it would be nice to go," Shirley agreed.

4

It was in January that they dined at Fred Cook's home in Newton Centre. To reach the other suburb it was necessary for them to go into the city by train and out again, and at Henry's suggstion Shirley came in town in the afternoon and met him at the office, and he and Shirley and Fred rode out to Newton Centre together. Fred, Shirley found, was enthusiastic about his new domicile, and when they came to the house Shirley uttered an exclamation of delight. It was larger than their own and it was located on an attractive street, well shaded, which ran down to a body of water where they saw skaters on the ice.

"It's ever so much nicer than where we live," Shirley told Molly. "You've so much more room!"

Henry, a little grieved by this remark, said defensively: "Our neighborhood is growing up, Shirley. That's the trouble. When we went to live there, it was like this; but now they've built stores up to within a block of us, and it's getting crowded."

"There'll never be stores around us here," Molly pointed out. "It's over half a mile to the centre of town. Of course, it's a long walk to go marketing, but we don't mind. And Fred and I go skating in the evening on the lake, and in the summer time, when it's hot, sometimes we slip down after it's dark and go swimming there."

Shirley, perceiving Henry's hurt, made no reply to this. "Of course we're really awfully comfortable," she confessed. "I don't know where we'd be as well off as where we are."

Henry shook his head. "Now, Shirley," he protested. "You know we're crowded, and we've sometimes talked of moving. But I don't suppose we could get a house out here, could we, Fred?"

"Most of the people out here own the houses they live in," Fred agreed. "So unless you wanted to buy. . . ."

Henry laughed. "I guess not," he confessed. "I guess we'll have to stay where we are."

Yet the event was to prove him wrong in this; and a series of circumstances almost accidental was to lead, in the spring, to their removal to the new locality. One night when Henry

came home from the office, Shirley reported to him, as though it were amusing but of no consequence, that a man had come that day to ask whether their house were for sale.

"He's bought the Malgraves' place," she explained. "On the corner. And he's going to put a block of stores there; and if he can buy our land here he'll do the same thing."

Henry laughed. "Not likely we'd sell our home, is it?" he reminded her. "What did you tell him?"

"Oh, I told him we weren't thinking of selling," Shirley agreed.

"What'd he say?" Henry asked.

She smiled. "He said we ought to think of it," she explained. "He said we could get a better price for the place now than we can later on. And he said he was going to come Sunday and see you about it."

"Well," Henry said good humoredly, "I'll be here."

He felt, although he did not confess this to Shirley, a sense of his own ignorance in such matters as this; and this consciousness on his part led him to speak to Clem Prior. Clem had once owned half a dozen scattered pieces of real estate in the locality. They had gone to satisfy his creditors, yet Henry thought the older man must have some acquaintance with values, might have advice to give on the question of selling. Clem, somewhat to his surprise, advised him to sell.

"You might get more by holding on," he said. "When the electric cars come a little nearer. But you might not. And if you can get a price now, I'd take it if I was you. The house would be all right for us, but with your sister living here, it's kind of crowded."

Henry stifled his resentment at this. "We could use more room," he agreed. "Only I don't know where we'd go."

"You could move further out," Clem reminded him. "There's houses building all the time that you could rent, or maybe buy."

Henry laughed and pointed out that he had no funds to buy a house; but during the next day or two the matter filled his thoughts. Yet it would hardly have led to any definite step except for the fact that on Saturday Fred Cook spoke to him in the office.

"Henry," he said. "There's going to be a house for rent on the next street to me, the end of April. A fellow named Fisher lives there. Rents it. He's moving to New York. I thought you might want to know about it."

"Oh, I guess we'll stay where we are," Henry told him.

"You could rent it pretty cheap probably," Cook insisted. "And it would be nice for us to have you near."

"We've got a house," Henry reminded Fred, and laughed a little. "I guess we're getting too old to move!"

"Well, I just thought I'd tell you," Cook said again. "Molly was all for it that I should tell you. She and Shirley always did get along pretty well, and she's got it all fixed in her own mind that you're going to move out there."

Henry smiled. "I'm afraid it takes more than that to move us," he replied.

But the next day was Sunday, and the man who had called on Shirley came to see him. His name was Broom, and he seemed so sure of himself and of his own intentions that Henry disliked him from the first. To Broom's direct question, Henry said, almost angrily, that the house was not for sale.

"I guess anything's for sale, if you can get your price," Broom argued, but Henry said stubbornly:

"It would take a pretty good price for us. A man likes to hang onto his home."

"That used to be so," Broom agreed. "But it's not that way any more. Not around here. Mrs. Broom and me, we've moved five times in the last six years, and bettered ourselves every time and made money out of it. You'd better get the habit too."

He got no encouragement from Henry, nor could he persuade Henry to set a price on the house. But at last, in something like desperation, Broom said:

"All right. If you won't set a figure, I will." And he told Henry how much he would pay.

Henry was astonished at the sum the other named. It was fourteen hundred dollars more than he had paid to buy the house from Clem Prior. He was startled; but he hid this from the other man and asked, in what he sought to make a business-like tone:

"Cash or mortgage?"

"Cash," said Broom. "I'll get my bank to take care of the mortgage end of it."

Henry hesitated, weakening. "Oh, there's no sense talking about it," he said. "We haven't got any place to go if we did sell."

"I'll find a house for you," Broom insisted, and Henry said resentfully:

"You don't have to! If we decide to move, we'll find a place to go."

Thereafter he remained for a while undecided, but forces worked upon him. The Malgraves were selling to move to an apartment in the city, and Malgrave advised Henry to take advantage of the opportunity.

"This neighborhood's running down," he pointed out. "Real estate's going to be worth less, here, right along. And this Broom, he's got more money than brains."

Henry had slowly come to a positive dislike for Malgrave, but he respected the other's ability to look out for his own interests. So Malgrave's advice had its effect on him.

But the decisive factor in the end was Shirley. As winter dragged into spring, Shirley was not well. She was, Henry began to perceive, not particularly strong; and she would have another baby toward the summer's end. When Henry discussed with her the possibility of moving, she refused to commit herself.

"I want you to do what you think is best, Henry," she told him. "The burden of it comes on you." But she added wistfully, "I don't think I can ever get over thinking baby's in this house. I almost see her sometimes."

So in the end, in a spirit of sullen submission, Henry decided to sell. But after the decision was made his spirits lifted. He, as well as Shirley, found in the prospect of change a certain exhilaration. They were at once timorous and intoxicated with their own daring. They moved on the first of May.

IV

The final negotiations preliminary to their removal brought them into contact with the owner of the new house. His name was King, and both Henry and Shirley liked him from their first encounter. His hair was snow white, and his eyes wore a slow smile of friendliness. When their inquiries led them to him, Mr. King displayed toward Henry and Shirley an interest almost fatherly. He agreed that the house was for

rent and at a low figure, but he asked where they had been living; and when Henry explained that they were selling their former home Mr. King said:

"Why don't you buy this house?"

"I don't think we could," Henry confessed. "It's a good deal bigger than the one we had."

"I shouldn't be hard on you," Mr. King assured them, appealing more to Shirley than to Henry. "You can pay a little down, and we'll raise the rent, say five dollars a month, and in a few years the house will be yours."

"That's the way we bought our other house," Henry agreed. "From Mrs. Beeker's father."

Mr. King looked at Shirley curiously. "Who is he?" he inquired, and Henry answered.

"Clem Prior," he explained. "He used to be in the grocery business."

"I think I've known him," Mr. King agreed.

"The new stores coming in put him out of business," Henry explained. "He lives with us now."

"I should advise you to buy this house," Mr. King said again, returning to the matter at hand. "It may seem like a burden now, but it will be very pleasant for you when you don't have to pay rent any longer."

Henry, necessarily conscious of the fact that he had for the first time in his life a considerable sum of actual cash in prospect, hesitated. "What do you think, Shirley?" he asked. "Do you think we ought to?"

She shook her head, but seemed reluctant to speak; and Mr. King observed this and drew away from them a little. "You talk it over," he suggested.

When they were thus left alone, Shirley said gravely to Henry: "Don't let's buy it, Henry. It would be nice, but you know we'll have to have some money in a few years, when Dan and Cynt get ready to go to college; and if we put this in the savings bank now, and add to it, it will be growing all the time."

"Plenty of time for that," Henry urged, but Shirley shook her head.

"Dan's nine years old," she reminded him. "And he's doing so well in school. He'll be going to college in seven or eight years."

So in the end they were agreed to pay rent and let the ownership remain in Mr. King's hands. "I hear you're a good landlord," Henry told the older man, and Mr. King smiled.

"I'm a better landlord than I can afford to be," he confessed. "That's why I would like to sell the house to you if I could. When you get in there, you'll be wanting things done to it, and it will be pretty hard for me to refuse you."

Henry and Shirley tried to reassure him. They liked him very much indeed, and they looked forward to their new associations with a keen anticipation.

The short street upon which stood the house into which Henry and Shirley were moving bore Mr. King's name, and the house itself was number twenty-one. The street was only half a block long, and theirs was the last house upon it. Beyond them lay uncultivated woodland, a waste in which grew handsome oak and chestnut trees, with a tangle of underbrush and brambles beneath. In the other direction, the street led toward the lake, opening upon another thoroughfare which ran parallel with the lake shore; and there were half a dozen handsome homes backing on the water and facing upon this thoroughfare. Shirley's first comment when she saw the place was a true one.

"It's a wonderful neighborhood, Henry!" she said, and Henry agreed, but he added laughingly:

"Ours is the ugliest house in it, though, Shirley!"

"I'd rather live in the worst house in a good neighborhood, than the best in a poor one," Shirley retorted. "And besides I don't think it's ugly at all."

It was in fact not so bad as Henry pretended to believe it. The house had been built perhaps twenty years before, and must at that time have accorded with the æsthetic ideas currently accepted. It was a long narrow structure, square and uncompromising except for bay windows in front and at the sides. It seemed to them tremendously spacious. The living room and dining room were connected by double doors, and: "They're almost as big as the whole lower floor of our old house," Henry declared. Behind the dining room there was a kitchen, with a dark but adequate pantry; and on one side of the kitchen there was a small sitting room and a store room behind the kitchen in the rear. Narrow stairs in this store room led up to what may have been designed as a bed room, immediately above it. But this appeared to have gone long unused, and a leak in the roof had somewhat stained the plaster.

In the second floor of the house itself there were four bed rooms, three of them large, and one extending clear across the house above the kitchen. This was accessible only through

the bathroom, installed seven or eight years before, or by ascending the back stairs. "There are three flights of stairs in the house, Henry!" Shirley pointed out. "Think of our having a house with three flights of stairs!"

"They had to have that many to get up to all these rooms," Henry suggested. "But we won't have to go up and down them all."

"We could almost live in one end of the house and rent the other," Shirley told him. "If we ever wanted to."

He touched her arm affectionately. "I guess we're going to need all the room we've got before we're through," he declared, and she colored with pleasure and leaned her cheek toward his.

"We must have the very sunniest room for a nursery," she reminded him.

When their removal had become a fact, the business of getting settled in their new quarters proved to be just begun. Henry, who had had some misgivings, forgot them when he saw Shirley's delight in all that went forward now. On Sundays, or whenever he was at home, she insisted that he help her move furniture this way and that, trying things in different places to discover where they were most effective; and when he remonstrated with her, told her she should be careful not to work too hard, she cried:

"But this isn't work, Henry! It's just play. I love doing it."

They eventually settled upon the large front bed room for their own. Shirley had wanted it to be the nursery, but Henry negatived this. "A baby doesn't need so much room," he insisted. "And the little bed room above the front door gets just as much sun."

Clem, who must be considered, would occupy a slightly smaller bed room immediately behind their own, and Mary and the two children would take the large chamber which ran across the width of the house above the kitchen.

Shirley faintly protested at this. "You ought to have a room of your own, Mary," she urged. "Where you can have quiet at night and not be listening for the children all the time."

But Mary, in a stubborn fashion, insisted upon the arrangement which had been in the beginning her suggestion. Henry's sister had become in the months since the baby's death curiously gay, as though life had for her no further terror. She no longer wept as she had used to do at the smallest pretext; was rather inclined to giggle in an absurd fashion as easily as she had shed tears before. She had completely put aside every

trace of that stony hardness which grief had first laid upon her. Henry thought, though he did not put the thought in words, that her sorrow had been sometimes less distressing than her gaiety was now become.

"I like sleeping in the room with them," she told Shirley. "It's company for me, and I'm company for them. And I thought I'd take the little room off the kitchen for a kind of sitting room where I can keep my things."

"There's no heat in it," Henry pointed out. "Except from the kitchen stove."

"Oh, I don't need any heat," Mary assured him, giggling foolishly. "I'm so big and fat!"

After this arrangement was more or less definitely crystallized, there was still the business of putting the house in order. They would need some new furniture, and Shirley and Henry haunted for a while the auction rooms in the city, watching their chances to buy at moderate prices a few chairs, a table or two, and two new beds for Cynthia and Dan. There were also curtains to be made and hung, and Shirley and Mary, by the very persistence of their own labors, became more and more energetic and enthusiastic.

Shirley said to Henry one night that their bed room ought to be papered, but Henry, who was beginning to be alarmed at the small but persistent drains upon their bank account, protested at this.

"Let's put it off, Shirley," he urged, "for another year."

"I talked to Mr. King," Shirley confessed. "And he said he would buy the paper if we'd pay for the labor of hanging it."

"I think the old paper will do," Henry insisted. "It looks all right to me."

"It's depressing," Shirley pleaded. "There are too many green flowers. I want something blue. A sort of a Delft blue. And I'm going to have blue curtains with yellow flowers on them."

"I think we'd better wait a little while," Henry said, and Shirley forebore to argue with him further.

But a few days later he came home one night to find a curious odor permeating the house, and the upper floor all in confusion. Mary and Shirley had decided between them that they could hang the paper as well as a professional. They had, when he came home, a fair corner of the room adequately done.

"It's perfectly easy," Shirley assured him. "After you learn the trick of it. The only thing that bothered us was mixing the

paste right. We didn't boil it thick enough at first, and it slopped all over everything, and the paper would kind of slide down off the wall. But after we learned how, it sticks beautifully. You have to be sure to get it right the first time, because you can't get it off if it isn't straight."

Henry was sufficiently masculine to feel that the two women had put him in the wrong. "You'll not be satisfied with it," he said resentfully. "And you'll have to have a man come and do it right before you're through. And we can't afford it, Shirley."

She laughed and chided him. "Now, Henry, we don't mind at all," she assured him, understanding the source of his resentment. "It's really fun. Mary and I like it, don't we, Mary?"

And Mary agreed. "You'd die laughing," she declared, "to see me climbing up on the table, with my skirts pinned up around me so I won't trip, and trying to get the paper out of my hair and onto the wall!"

Henry uttered a noncommittal sound, but he added warningly to Shirley: "Don't you go climbing on any tables, Honey. You're in no state to go climbing around."

"Oh, I don't," Shirley assured him. "I just hand things up to Mary. She's really doing all the work."

"Your father ever do any paper hanging, did he?" Henry asked, and Shirley flushed unhappily. She knew that Henry resented her father's idleness, resented the fact that the older man was simply an incubus upon their hands.

"I don't think so, Henry," she said. "I'll ask him to help us if you want me to. He's having such a good time now. He takes Dan and Cynthia down to the lake shore, when they come home from school; and it's really a help to have him take them off our hands."

Henry was silenced in the end, and although he would not have confessed this to Shirley, he felt a reluctant admiration for her and for Mary because they were able to do this chore. But on the following day when he came home it was to see a carriage stopped before the door, and he hurried into the house with quick misgivings. Mary met him in the lower hall, and he saw that she was pale with fear. He stammered a quick question to her.

"What's the matter, Mary? Where's Shirley?"

"She tried to get up on the table to help me," Mary confessed. "And she fell. The doctor's upstairs with her now."

Henry flung his hat aside and went bounding up the stairs. So there was to be no new baby to take the place of the

one they had lost, after all; and they were scarce accustomed to the hurt of this blow before they had to receive another one. The doctor told Henry that it would not be safe for Shirley ever to bear another child.

"I won't answer for it if she does," he explained. "I think it would be the death of her. Your wife's not strong, young man."

Henry did not tell Shirley this at once. He waited till she was somewhat recovered, till the end of the first summer in the new home, when she was superficially as she had always been. But when he told her, he saw that she had guessed the truth before this; for she received his statement with a curious submission, seemed only fearful on his account.

"Will you be unhappy, Henry," she asked, "if I can't give you any more babies?"

He laughed reassuringly, and held her close. "I guess nothing can make me unhappy, Hon, as long as I've got you and Dan and Cynt," he replied.

"As long as we've got each other," she agreed, and lay quiescent in his arms.

2

That summer had seen some changes in the office. In June David Pell and Henry had lunch together one day, as they occasionally did, and David confessed that he was planning to leave the paper. His book had had a moderate sale, his second was almost ready for the publishers. "And I've saved money," David explained. "Enough to last me for two or three years, anyway. I've got all I can out of the work here, and I want more time to put into writing."

Henry received the word thoughtfully. "Will you stay in town?" he asked at last.

"Oh, yes," David assured him. "Yes, I'll keep the same rooms."

"I don't suppose we'll see as much of each other," Henry suggested. "We haven't seen much, as it was; but I always enjoy talking with you."

"Why of course we will," David assured him. "I'd like to see more of you, Henry, and there's no reason why we shouldn't, when I'm boss of my own time."

"You know," Henry confessed diffidently, "you and I have always been pretty good friends, Dave. But I guess we never

could be really intimate. You've never said anything about it, but we're different. You know that as well as I do."

"I don't know anything of the kind," Pell retorted, and Henry smiled.

"Well," he said. "My father was a blacksmith. It's a sort of a step upward, I suppose, for me to be a newspaper man. My father never read a book in his life, I don't imagine. Nor my mother either. They were wonderful, Dave, and they worked hard and they did everything they could for us; but you've lived with books and another sort of people. You don't really belong in the newspaper game anyway."

"There are all sorts of men in the newspaper business," Pell told him, faintly uncomfortable.

"I know," Henry agreed and smiled. "And I'm one of them." He added stubbornly, "I'm not as bad as some of them, I don't think. I don't think I'm like Marty Bull, or Jimmy Horn, or some of the fellows who come and work for us for six months and then move on again. They haven't any respect for anything, Dave. It's just a job to them, and not much of a job at that. But I always feel that a newspaper man has a lot of responsibility, if he wants to take it. I think if they respect themselves, people will get to respect them."

"I don't think Bull and Jimmy Horn are typical newspaper men," Pell agreed. "You have nothing in common with them, Henry. In fact," he continued, "I don't know that you belong in the newspaper business any more than I do. You're a conscientious fellow, and you cling pretty strenuously to a certain set of ideals; and it seems to me that the newspapers are beginning to forget their ideals more and more. Take a man like Ben Harris. Ben's an able man, but he's a great deal more interested in selling a lot of papers than he is what his readers get out of the papers he sells."

"Ben's been mighty good to me," Henry said loyally.

"To me, too," Dave agreed. "I'm not complaining. I've said the same thing to Ben. I think he feels it a little, Henry. I think he feels that he's tied himself to a wheel and can't get off. I think perhaps he'd change if he could. The *Tribune*'s a good deal more conservative now than it used to be."

Henry asked, "Have you told him you're going to quit?" and Pell shook his head.

"I'm going to talk to him in a day or two," he said. "But I sha'n't be leaving till September."

David's intention to resign from the paper did not in the

end materialize. He spoke of it to Harris, but Harris was unwilling to lose him, and looked about for some means to hold Pell in the service of the *Tribune*. In the end he asked David to go to Washington. Pell protested that he was unwilling to supplant Pat Dryden; but Harris laughed at that.

"Pat wants to come home," he declared. "He's been saying so now for a year. Pat's pretty near sixty years old, you know, Dave, and that's a strenuous game over there. He'll really be more valuable to us here, to write New England politics the way Tom Pope used to, and to comment on what's going on all over the country. I was thinking of making a change, anyway."

Pell could not resist this opportunity. "It's a good deal like being nominated for president," he told Henry smilingly. "No man is big enough to decline that office, and I suppose no newspaper man can afford to pass up a chance for a few years in Washington. I'm going to go." He added suggestively, "How'd you like to cover the State House, Henry?" But Henry shook his head.

"I'm not up to that," he confessed. "It takes an older man."

"How old are you?" Pell asked, and Henry told him:

"I'll be thirty-two this fall."

"You seem more mature than that," David commented. "I think you could swing it. I'm going to tell Ben Harris so."

For a few days thereafter, in spite of his sense of his own unfitness, Henry secretly cherished the hope that Harris might give him the new assignment. Ben, it seemed to him, avoided his eye, and Henry guessed at last that although Pell had in fact made the suggestion, Harris did not agree with it. So he put the hope away and forgot it for a while; and when Pell at last left to go to Washington Henry was not surprised to see Bob Proctor sent up the Hill.

There must have been some discussion of Henry for the new position, for Marty Bull spoke of it to him one day. Marty, although he had not been continuously employed on the *Tribune*, was forever reappearing on the staff. Harris fired him and hired him; Marty resigned and returned. He was one of those men akin to the old race of tramp printers, who are forever restless in any settled position. He said to Henry, half derisively:

"Heard you were going up on the Hill!"

But when Henry denied any knowlege of such a possibility, Bull accepted his denial. "Guess I was wrong then,"

he agreed; but he added a moment later another question.

"Say, you hear anything from Harry Coster now?"

"No," Henry told him. "No, I haven't heard from him since he went to the Klondike."

"I had a letter from him last spring." Bull asserted, and when Henry betrayed no curiosity, he continued. "He's in Spokane. He wanted to borrow a hundred dollars. Wanted me to telegraph it to him. It's a wonder he didn't come down on you. I wrote him you had sold your house and probably had money in the bank."

"He didn't," Henry said decisively, and Bull waved his hand.

"Well, you may hear from him yet," he suggested. "He'll come around some day when he needs some money."

Henry did not mention this conversation to Mary nor to Clem. Shirley's father still sometimes spoke of Coster, always with an accusing eye on Henry when he did so. Henry had long since learned to refrain from argument with the older man.

3

Henry was beginning to lose his capacity for emotional reaction to the news events of the day. The eruption of Mt. Pelee left him unmoved. He was much more interested in ping-pong, which when Shirley was able to be on her feet again they played together almost every evening; and Mary would join them till she grew weak with laughter at her own failures. Shirley taught young Dan to play, and the boy had a proud moment one Sunday afternoon when, with Henry's skilful connivance, he beat his father at the game.

But Henry had still his heroes; and he was immensely interested when in September President Roosevelt visited Massachusetts. The President's narrow escape from death when a Pittsfield street car collided with the carriage in which he was riding seemed to Henry an outrage and a public shame; and he wrote indignantly in this strain to David Pell, who had been with the presidential party on that day. David replied in a long letter.

"You sound," he said whimsically, "as though the street car motorman had been your child. You're exactly like an apologetic father. I can assure you the President doesn't hold any grudge against Massachusetts as a whole for the acci-

dent." And he continued for a while discussing his activities in Washington, and then spoke of Massachusetts politics.

"Harris thought you weren't quite ready for the State House job," he told Henry. "But I think he has it in mind to send you up there later on. You'd better follow political affairs pretty closely from now on, so's to be ready if the chance does come."

And he added a little further on in the letter: "I had a note from Pat Dryden the other day. He hadn't seen you for a good many years. He told me he thought you were getting fat, and it occurs to me that perhaps you haven't been taking care of yourself as you should, Henry. I don't know whether you get any exercise or not. Do you still make a garden? You can't work unless you are in shape. You ought to look out for that, Henry."

He was, he confessed, finding little time for writing. "It's a new job here," he pointed out. "And I've a good deal to learn." And he asked, "Have you read 'The Virginian' or 'The Blazed Trail'? You don't have to go to Africa for romance, Henry. There's plenty of it in this country, if you have the eyes to see. You'd better throw away your manuscript and start a new novel and call it 'I Speak of the United States'. There'd be a lot more people anxious to read it.

"And speaking of romance, have you read 'The Letters of a Self Made Merchant to his Son'? I expect business is the big romance in this country right now. Politics is drama, perhaps, but the romance is in business.

"Was there much of a howl over there over the formation of the International Mercantile Marine? I think there's going to be a revulsion against the trusts pretty soon. There's a lot of irresponsible shouting here now, but there's also some quiet talking and that will lead to something in the end."

Henry had also in December of that year a letter from Shirley's brother, Mat. Mat was very much excited over the fact that Henry Ford had driven an automobile a mile in 1.01⅕. "He'll beat a mile a minute in another year," Mat predicted proudly. And Henry read the letter aloud to Shirley and said tolerantly:

"Mat's just as crazy about automobiles as he ever was."

He himself was not particularly moved by young Prior's enthusiasm. Henry had not so many enthusiasms now.

V

The process of adjustment to their new neighborhood was one which Henry and Shirley enjoyed. The locality was attractive and their neighbors were cordial. Mr. and Mrs. Campion, elderly and gentle folk, lived directly across the street. Mr. Campion was in the wool business. Their house, adorned with the scroll saw work characteristic of the architecture of a certain period, was the largest on King Street, and Mr. Campion told Henry that it had been the first house on the street. He and Mrs. Campion came to call one evening, and Henry and Shirley, who had no warning, were awed into a painful silence by their coming; but the older people knew how to put them at their ease. Mrs. Campion talked to Shirley about her children.

"I already know Dan and Cynthia quite well," she explained. "They come to see me regularly. I think they like my cookies!"

Shirley said uncomfortably, "I hope they don't bother you. I always tell them not to ask for anything to eat away from home."

"Bless you!" Mrs. Campion retorted comfortingly. "I keep a jar full of cookies in my pantry all the time as bait for children. It's a regular club house for all the children in the neighborhood."

"Have you any children?" Shirley asked, and bit her lips with regret when the words were spoken for fear Mrs. Campion had no children and was sensitive on the point. But the older woman—she was a large and comfortable figure of a person—laughed heartily.

"Children and grandchildren by the dozens!" she declared. "Sometimes I almost lose track of them. My two boys live in New York, and my daughter married a Chicago man. They come home once in a while. I wish they came oftener, but it's hard to travel, because they all have big families. Wilbur —he's the oldest—has four children, and Jim has two, and Martha has three. You'll see them here sooner or later."

"I hope so," Shirley agreed politely. She was sadly at a loss for small talk. Mrs. Campion was so much older, so much more assured.

Mr. Campion and Henry carried on a conversation of their own, Clem Prior interjecting an occasional word. Mr. Campion told Henry something of the history of the neighborhood, described what the locality had been like when he and Mrs. Campion first came there to build; and when he had exhausted that topic he spoke of business. The premonitory symptoms of "the rich man's panic" were already appearing.

"There may be quite a disturbance," Mr. Campion predicted. "It's a question of undigested securities. The tremendous flotations of recent years have glutted the market, and people have bought more than their means justified them in buying. Also I suppose the promoters' stock is coming into the market, or has come in, and that is in speculative hands. We may see some black days."

Henry had only the vaguest idea what the other was talking about. Although he had more than three thousand dollars in the savings banks, he had never acquired the habit of reading the market news.

"I guess that's so," he agreed.

"Of course," said Mr. Campion, "the man with a salary won't suffer. In fact, he's usually the one who profits by panics, by low prices, so long as his salary continues."

When Henry and Shirley were alone that night, she said with a thrill of satisfaction in her voice: "That was nice, wasn't it, Henry? I think it was awfully nice of them to come to see us."

"Yes," Henry agreed. "Yes, they're mighty nice. I liked them."

"We must go and see them soon."

"We'll go over and sit on the porch some evening," Henry suggested. "I'd feel kind of foolish making a real call."

"You'll have to get used to it," Shirley told him. "People have been nice to us, and we've got to be nice to them."

This was quite true. Both Henry and Shirley made friends easily, and kept them, and their neighbors were for the most part cordial. A Scotchman named David Kirconnel lived next door. He was a fire insurance agent with an office in the centre of town, and Shirley liked Lucy Kirconnel very much. She was a small, bright-eyed, brown-haired, methodical person, and an excellent housekeeper, and she was able to advise even Shirley. They had one child; Helen Kirconnel was two

years younger than Dan, tall and fair, and in Henry's opinion very beautiful. Lucy Kirconnel came in to see Shirley, running across from her kitchen door, almost every afternoon, and Shirley had early come to the point of borrowing and loaning with her.

The Heywoods occupied the house behind their own. Henry sometimes encountered Joe Heywood on the way to the station, since they took the same train in the morning; but though Heywood—a tall, slender young man, with a stoop to his shoulders and a long, half-aquiline nose—was as polite as the occasion demanded, he showed no disposition to carry the acquaintance any further. Anita Heywood had not called on Shirley, but their three children—two girls and a boy—played with Dan and Cynthia.

Dan had found another playmate. To the north of their house lay the undeveloped woodland, extending through perhaps a quarter of a mile to Beacon Street, and Dan explored this tract of land, his imagination peopling it not only with wild animals, but with wild men. A gray squirrel was as apt as not to become in his eyes a wolf, a lion, or even an elephant; and the rustling of a sparrow feeding in the dry leaves on the ground made his heart leap and pound. The savages, whom it delighted him to imagine there, were more difficult; but as his explorations extended he one day discovered another boy in the further fringe of the wood engaged in building a shanty out of scraps of used lumber at the base of a big chestnut tree. Dan spied upon the other boy's activities for what seemed to him a long time—it may have been as much as five minutes—then his curiosity drove him forward, and after an interval of suspicious appraisal the other boy accepted him.

This other boy's name was Thad Gore. His father, Dan told Shirley in tones of awe, was a policeman. Thad came to the kitchen door with Dan one day to get some potatoes which they intended to roast in an improvised stove at the shanty, and Shirley said uncertainly that night to Henry:

"I don't know whether Dan ought to play with him. He's older than Dan, thirteen or fourteen I should think, and a great deal bigger."

Henry always resented any suggestion that Dan was small. "You'll find Dan will grow a lot in three or four years," he retorted.

"It isn't that so much," Shirley confessed. "I think this Gore boy does bully Dan, but Dan doesn't seem to mind it.

But what worries me is that Dan makes a hero out of him, and I'm afraid this boy swears. He looks as though he would. He's really awfully rough looking, Henry."

Henry was inclined to laugh at her fears. "Dan's got to get out and meet all sorts of people sooner or later," he reminded her.

"But I don't like to have him like them," Shirley insisted. "You didn't when you were a boy, Henry. You don't like Marty Bull now. You don't like Jimmy Horn. You're naturally gentle, Henry, and I want Dan to be like you."

Henry said doubtfully, "I don't want him to be too much like me, Shirley."

"Don't be silly, Henry," she protested. "You know you're wonderful."

"I know you think so," he agreed, and smiled, and the matter ended there thus indecisively.

They found, as time drew on, that they liked the Kirconnels better than any others of their neighbors. Lucy Kirconnel warned Shirley one day, in a serious way, that this was a mistake on her part. "We're really hardly respectable, Shirley," she pointed out, and Shirley cried:

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Of course," Lucy explained, "we mean to be respectable, and we think we are." She laughed suddenly in a bubbling, mirthful way. "You see, in a suburb like this," she said, "there are social distinctions. It doesn't much matter what your business is, so long as you go to work in the city every day. If you do that, it's all right; but if you're in business out here, it's not quite the same, and especially if you're in business in a very small way, the way my David is. Of course, if he should ever make a great deal of money out of fire insurance, it would probably be different. But people don't seem to worry much about fires around here."

Lucy always had the effect of cheering Shirley and making her see the amusing side of life, and Shirley said now, gaily: "Why, I'll fix that. I'll make Henry take out fire insurance on our furniture right away!"

"Well then," Mrs. Kirconnel agreed, "it will be all right. But until you do that, you'd better not be seen too much with me. You'd really lose caste by it!"

Shirley did not take this warning very seriously, but she did repeat what the other woman had said to Henry, and was interested. "But everybody's been very nice to us," he reminded her, and Shirley agreed.

"I think it's just her imagination," she suggested. "I think she's probably a sensitive little thing; but I like her very much, I don't care who she is."

"I like Dave, too," said Henry.

Shirley laughed. "And you must go in and let him sell you some fire insurance," she said. "I promised Lucy you would."

They enjoyed these new contacts and acquaintances. Curiously enough, their removal was not followed by any renewed intimacy with the Fred Cooks. For no particular reason, that friendship languished. Molly Cook had made friends of a sort who did not appeal to Shirley, so that Shirley was in their company ill at ease; and as an added cause of petty friction, Molly's daughter was an unhealthy and unwholesome child with whom Shirley preferred Cynthia should not play. So though there was no surface break between them, and though Fred and Henry still said to one another in the office, "We've got to get together more," or "You've got to come over to dinner some night soon," they saw as a matter of fact very little of each other.

Henry and Shirley transferred their church affiliations, and for a while continued their regular attendance. But the congregation here was large, there was a great deal of stress on social activities, and they were both faintly uncomfortable in this atmosphere. Only the fact that it was necessary to set an example for Dan and Cynthia sustained for a time their former zeal.

2

Henry began about this time to discover that his children were approaching maturity. The discovery arose not so much from any change in them as from an intangible change in Henry himself. He was for a time at this period in his life beset by a curious physical restlessness, which manifested itself in occasional moods of discontent and rebellion, and in a capacity for irritation. When he came home for supper he was apt to be tired, nervously and physically, and small matters could annoy him. If Shirley met him gaily, with a welcoming kiss, he presented to her a frozen countenance, resenting for no reason at all the fact that she was so bright and cheerful when he himself was weary; if, on the other hand, Shirley were tired, if she called down to him from her room instead of coming down to meet him, he thought mo-

rosely that she who had nothing to do all day but stay at home could at least have a welcome for him in the evening.

If the children came rioting to greet him, he resented the fact that they were so noisy and boisterous; and if, on the other hand, they were still at their play and had not come indoors, he resented that.

"There's something the matter with our home," he told Shirley, "if it isn't attractive enough to keep them here."

For the most part, however, Henry was conscious of the fact that he was unreasonable, and he kept his irritations to himself. When he permitted them to appear, Shirley was always so stricken with grief and unhappiness; and Shirley was not strong. Her health was always something of a problem, her powers only barely equal to the tasks she had to do. So when Henry hurt or saddened her, he hated himself for doing it; and this in turn made him the more angry at her and at the world. In sheer self-defense he tried to keep his tongue under control, and would, even when Shirley questioned him, deny that he felt the annoyance so often visible in his countenance.

But he was not always so careful to avoid hurting the children. When they were younger they had received his occasional bursts of irritation either with docility or with tears; but now he was forced to the understanding that they were become individuals and as such entitled to consideration. He came home one winter evening to find Dan's skates lying on the floor inside the front door, and he shouted angrily for his son. Dan appeared from the living room, his face a little white with fear at his father's tone, and Henry said vehemently:

"You pick up those skates and put them away. And the next time I see them lying around, I'm going to take them down cellar and break them up with the back of the axe."

Dan stood still for a moment, looking at him with that curious blank gaze which children can assume. Then he picked up the skates without a word and put them in the closet under the stairs. Henry was already a little ashamed of his outburst.

"There's no sense in that sort of thing," he said, trying to strengthen his anger by repetition. "Your mother and Aunt Mary work all day to keep this house in order, and you come home and make a mess of it in fifteen minutes."

Dan looked at him again, and then he whistled softly un-

der his breath, not with defiance, but as though he had not heard, and turned and walked away.

Shirley was upstairs. She had been lying down, and she called down to Henry now. "Hello, Honey!"

He looked after Dan for a moment, a little uncertainly, and then went up to see how Shirley was. She made no comment, though she must have overheard; and her very silence made Henry more ashamed of himself. Later, when Dan came to kiss him goodnight before going to bed, Henry was struck with the fact that this son of his had borne himself rather well through the late unpleasantness; and he said apologetically:

"Dan, I meant what I said a while ago about your skates, but there wasn't any need of my yelling at you the way I did. I guess I was tired."

"Oh, that's all right," Dan said forgivingly, and kissed his father and went upstairs.

But there were other instances like this, and on one occasion when some petty incident put the cap to a series of annoyances, Henry shouted angrily at Cynthia; and the little girl promptly burst into piteous tears. Her tears were as effective as a woman's in making Henry feel himself abjectly in the wrong, in making him resolve to bridle his angry tongue.

He learned in these fashions, and more and more thoroughly as time went on, the lesson of self-control. The children were dependent upon him; they were his charge, and they loved him. He must take care not only to protect them against the buffets of the world, but must protect them, too, against himself. The same thing, he perceived, was true of his sister Mary, and of Shirley's father. Mary and Clem were often unreasonable and irritating; they had little traits and tricks which maddened Henry, and he had tried at times to work some change in them. But they were, he perceived more and more clearly, too old to change. There was nothing he could do but accept the obligations which life imposed upon him, recognize the permanence of his responsibilities, and make the best bargain with happiness that he could.

He had occasional pleasure in devising little things to do for the children, for these others too. One of the things he did, three or four months after they moved into the new house, was to install a telephone. Shirley enjoyed it immensely.

Henry's work in the office during this period was not particularly interesting. Only now and then did a story come along calculated to catch and hold his attention. When the Wright brothers at last succeeded in achieving mechanical flight, Henry was not particularly moved. He had discounted this in advance, had recognized the fact that their success was only a question of time. The Iroquois Theatre fire struck him, as it did the country, with a keen sense of horror; and when during the following year he and Shirley occasionally went to the theatre on tickets which Ben Harris gave him, they always saw the raising of the newly installed asbestos curtain with a reminiscent tremor.

Toward most news stories Henry had the newspaper man's attitude, and the events of the world were important to him only as they were potential circulation builders. But tragedy never lost its hold on him. When Mabel Page's murdered body was found, he had almost a personal interest in the mystery, and he read every line that was published not only in the *Tribune*, but also in the other papers, until Tucker's arrest a week or so later.

The steady growth of the *Tribune* still filled him with pride, and when a colored Sunday supplement was added to the paper, he took home one of the first copies off the press and planned to keep it as a curiosity, and told Shirley to put it away where it would be safe. Shirley, cleaning up the attic years later, was to find it in an old cardboard box there; but when she showed it to Henry he was no longer interested.

David Pell's second novel was published and made some success. Mr. Campion read it and spoke of it to Henry one night, as they walked home together from the station, and Henry said proudly: "I've known Pell for years. He used to work on the *Tribune* and he's our Washington man now. I remember the first day he came in the office. I showed him around, told him what he'd have to do."

"I read his first book," Mr. Campion commented. "This is a great advance on that. I believe he'll go far."

Henry was proud of David, in spite of the fact that he could see no particular merit in Pell's work. "He's a fine fellow," he agreed. "But I don't care so much for his books. He just writes about the things that everybody knows." He

added, "I read a book the other day that's more my kind. 'The Call of the Wild.' Have you read that?"

Mr. Campion had not. "It's laid in the Klondike," Henry explained. "I like that sort of thing, about adventures, better. My sister's husband is up there now. He went up there years ago. We haven't heard from him for a long time."

"Oh, I thought she was Miss Beeker," Mr. Campion remarked, and Henry, sorry he had mentioned Harry, regretfully explained:

"She had to divorce him. He's not much good, always got some wild idea. She took her maiden name."

Mr. Campion nodded in an understanding silence; said no more.

One of their neighbors kept his automobile in operation all that winter, and Henry occasionally saw it on the streets. This reminded him that he had not written to Mat for some time, and he wrote a letter to Shirley's brother that night and spoke of the matter. Mat, in his reply, laughed at Henry for being surprised at this.

"You're just a natural born old timer," he told Henry. "Wake up, old man! The world is going ahead! What you need is something to shake you out of a rut. Why don't you and Shirley come on here next summer and we'll all go down to St. Louis to the World's Fair together? I'll show you some real automobiles there."

Henry and Shirley read the letter aloud, and they laughed at this suggestion, but the possibility remained in Henry's mind. One night two or three days later, while he and Shirley were getting ready for bed, he spoke of it to her again.

"We might go, at that," he suggested.

Shirley shook her head. "I don't want to leave the children," she said, and he knew what she was thinking and abandoned the matter, but his thoughts turned back to their former trip to Detroit and he realized abruptly how time had sped since then.

"The years seem mighty short now, don't they?" he said thoughtfully. "They slip away before you know it."

"We'll have been in this house two years, day after tomorrow," Shirley agreed.

"That's so," Henry assented. "It doesn't seem more than two or three months really, does it?" He looked at his wife appraisingly. "Shirley," he said, "we're beginning to get old."

She laughed at him at that. "Don't be absurd, Henry!"

"I was talking to Pat Dryden today," Henry insisted. "He told me I was getting fat, and I weighed on the way home. You know, I've gained six pounds, and my pants are getting tight in the waist."

"You need to make a garden again," Shirley told him. "There's nothing better than weeding a bed of radishes to reduce your waist measure, Henry."

"Maybe I will," he agreed.

She got into bed, and he sat on the bed side, half undressed, thinking and talking to her. "It's been nice out here, hasn't it?" he asked.

"I've loved every minute of it," she told him.

"It's nice for the children," Henry continued. "You know, Dan's growing up all the time. He and Thad Gore together as much as they used to be?"

"Every day," Shirley replied. "I've spoken to Dan about it, but he can beat me in an argument every time, Henry."

Henry chuckled proudly. "I guess he's going to be a lawyer," he suggested.

"Cynt's playing with them now, too," Shirley said doubtfully. "I suppose it's all right, but she's getting so she talks like Thad, out of the side of her mouth, sometimes. And she's picked up a lot of slang."

"I thought she and Helen were wrapped up in their dolls," Henry protested.

"I asked her the other day why she doesn't play with Helen any more," Shirley said. "But she says Helen's a sissy."

Henry laughed. "Cynt a tomboy, is she?"

"She's getting to be," Shirley agreed. "I wish she'd see more of Helen. Helen's such a little lady. Dan liked her for a while, but he's at the stage now where he doesn't like any girls."

"He'll get over that," Henry reminded her. "He'll probably be in love with Helen in three or four years."

"She's going to be a lovely girl," Shirley agreed, and she added, thoughtfully: "Wouldn't it be sweet if they did fall in love with each other?"

"Good Lord!" Henry protested. "Don't go marrying the kid off yet! He's only eleven years old."

"Well, he'll be older before we know it," Shirley reminded him. And then at some thought, she giggled, and Henry said:

"What are you laughing at?"

"I didn't tell you," Shirley said, "about the funeral they had for Hen?"

"I told Dan to bury him," Henry remarked.

"Thad arranged it," Shirley explained. "He and Dan got a soap box down cellar and made a coffin out of it, and Cynthia lined it with an old petticoat of mine. And Thad and Dan were the pall bearers, and Cynthia had to walk behind the coffin and cry out loud before they'd be satisfied. You never heard such a wailing!"

Henry chuckled. "Where was the interment?" he inquired.

"Over in the woods, by Thad's shanty," Shirley explained. "Dan says they dug the grave there, so that they could take care of it; and they're planning to plant flowers on it in the spring."

Henry said thoughtfully, "Mary was pretty badly cut up when that fool dog died," and Shirley nodded.

"He was perfectly devoted to her," she reminded him. "Used to follow her around, and snore and snort, and she would talk to him as though he were a baby."

"Dan ought to have a dog," Henry commented.

"We might get another one for Mary," Shirley amended. "She's so lonely sometimes. With no one to take care of. The children are so independent now."

"And every other living thing she ever loved is dead," Henry added sorrowfully.

"Except you," Shirley reminded him, and Henry laughed.

"Oh, I suppose she's always loved me," he agreed. "Always will."

He said goodnight at last. Shirley of late had been restless at night, and they had given up sleeping together. Henry now had a bed in the small room above the front door.

VI

In May of that year, Henry's old hero, Stanley, the explorer, died. The dispatch in the morning papers struck upon Henry's eyes with shocking force, and he had a momentary sorrow before his heart lifted with pride in the achievements of that great man. He rose at once and crossed to Ben Harris' desk, and said quickly:

"Here, Ben! I'd like to write Stanley's obit. They're not very busy on the desk just now."

Harris looked up at him, faintly uncomfortable. "Why, Pat Dryden's doing it, Henry," he explained. "I guess he's got it pretty well under way."

Henry said earnestly, "I've read all Stanely's books, Ben. I know more about him than Dryden does."

"Oh, I guess Dryden can give us as much as we want," Harris replied, and Henry, thus rebuffed, hesitated for a moment and at last went disconsolately back to his place again.

He could see Dryden at work at his desk in the further corner of the city room, sifting through the envelopes full of clippings, turning from them now and then to his typewriter. Peter Fly, the head of the copy desk, had heard Henry speak to Harris; so when the copy came along he gave it to Henry to handle, and Henry, who had no meanness in him, acknowledged to himself that Dryden had done the job in a fashion beyond his own powers. When the copy had gone downstairs he crossed to tell Dryden so.

"It wasn't just that you got the facts," he said. "But, Pat, you got some of the spirit of the man. It's a great piece of work."

Dryden smiled faintly. He was, by this time, past sixty, and the fringe of hair which circled the bald dome of his head was almost white; it had been black as coal when Henry first saw him; yet Dryden's eyes were still as keen and shrewd as they had used to be, and he smiled now at Henry's praise and said soberly:

"Well, Stanley was a great man."

"I made a kind of a hero out of him," Henry confessed, "when I first discovered him." And he added diffidently, "I thought he was such a great fellow that I set out to write a novel, Pat. It's mostly about his work, I guess. I called it 'I Speak of Africa.' "

"Ever finish it?" Dryden asked, and Henry shook his head.

"Oh, I wrote a lot," he explained. "Probably close to a hundred thousand words. But I've kept changing it and I never did get the proper ending."

"Well," said Dryden, "you've got the ending now, if you know how to catch it. Here's a man who gave fifty years of his life to the newspaper game in one form or another; gave up his youth to it. Never had time for romance till he was old. He was married in Westminster Abbey with all the pomp

and ceremony of a king. But he was an old man then. And now he's dead. That's the way to end any tale about a newspaper man, Henry." He hesitated and was silent for a moment, his eyes clouded with thought, and Henry stood uncomfortably by, waiting. Then Dryden chuckled and added practically: "This would be a good time to spring your book on the public, Henry. You'd better finish it and trot it up to a publisher."

"Well, I might," Henry agreed, and the possibility stayed in his mind all that day. When he came home at night he asked Shirley at the dinner table:

"Shirley, where is that novel of mine? Do you know?"

"I think it's up in the attic," Shirley told him. "In my old trunk. I remember wrapping it up in a piece of an old sheet and putting it away."

"I think I'll look it over," Henry said. "Stanley's dead, and Pat Dryden thinks that's going to make people more interested in Africa for a while. I bet if it were published now, they'd buy it."

"I know they would," Shirley loyally agreed. "I'll hunt it up for you."

Henry had in the past known many ambitions, and with what powers he possessed, had struggled to achieve them; and some of these goals of his had been attained without any resulting satisfaction, and others still eluded him. This novel, he now determined, he would carry to its end; and after dinner, he moved into the little room above the front door his table and his typewriter, shifting his bed to make space for them; and Shirley searched out the neglected manuscript. Henry plunged into it, and with such a rising and appreciative zeal that when Shirley went to bed about ten o'clock he was still engrossed. She woke some time after midnight and saw that his light was still burning and came, sleepily rubbing her eyes, to remind him that it was time to go to bed. He looked up at her, almost without recognition; then his eyes cleared and he said quickly:

"Shirley, you'll catch cold!"

"You ought to get to bed, Henry," she urged him. "You'll be tired tomorrow."

He waved this suggestion aside. "This is darned good in places, Shirley," he declared. "It's better than I realized. I'm going to go ahead and finish it."

"You're not going to finish it tonight," she reminded him. "There are other evenings coming."

"I'll bet I can finish it in a month, if I work every evening," he predicted.

"If you work this late every evening, you'll be sick in a month," Shirley insisted, and he surrendered for the moment and was presently abed.

But his enthusiasm persisted, and during the days that followed he gave to the work as much time as he could find. Once or twice he even stayed at home from church so that he could work Sunday morning while the house was quiet, and Clem Prior gloomily predicted that this impiety would lead to no good in the end. The task dragged along into the summer. Henry and Shirley had given up all thought of going to the World's Fair in St. Louis, although Mat and Fanny wrote again to urge them to do so. His vacation came the first two weeks in July, and they had thought they might all go to a boarding house in the country somewhere for that fortnight; but as the time approached Shirley saw that Henry had forgotten. He said one night:

"My vacation starts next week, Shirley. I'll be able to finish 'I Speak of Africa' while I'm at home."

"You don't think you ought to go away somewhere and rest, do you?" she suggested, and he shook his head.

"We can be comfortable right here," he insisted. "It's as cool here as it is anywhere, and the lake's only about a block away; and the children are out of doors all day, so that it's quiet. You and the children might go, Shirley. Mary'll take care of me and Clem."

But Shirley, when she could not dissuade him, refused to go away without him. "If we go," she pointed out, "it will be expensive, and we're not saving as much as we ought to, Henry. The children keep needing clothes, and things cost more than they used to, it seems to me."

Henry nodded indifferently. "Well, you'll go if you want to, won't you?" he repeated, and Shirley promised she would, but she did not mean this promise, nor in the end did she go.

Henry did, in fact, finish his long enterprise before his vacation was done. He had when the task was completed a feeling of despair and lassitude, and he could see no merit in the work at all. His depression was so great that Shirley looked around for means to comfort him. She herself had read the interminable pages more than once, but she reread them now and told Henry she thought they were fine. She tried to persuade Mary to read the novel, and Clem, too; but Mary reminded Shirley that her eyes were too weak for such a

strain, and Clem indifferently ignored Shirley's urgencies. Shirley read some passages aloud to Dan and Cynthia, and Dan, with the uncritical appreciation of youth, thought they were wonderful. He boasted to the Heywood children; told them proudly:

"My father's written a novel about Africa, and it's great! Full of lions and elephants and things!"

Heywood, in his back yard one evening, working among the flower beds, called to Henry who was cutting the grass: "I hear you've written a novel."

"Why yes," Henry agreed. The Heywoods had been more neighborly of late. Lucy Kirconnel told Shirley that the cotton market had collapsed in February and that Heywood had lost a great deal of money. "David says he's living on borrowed money right now," she declared, a certain triumph in her tones. "They were always spenders, and too proud to be neighborly, but I guess now they're poor as the rest of us it's different!"

Henry had liked Heywood, in their occasional encounters; and he could not but be flattered by the other's overtures toward friendliness. "I'd like to have a look at it, Beeker," Heywood suggested; and in the end Henry invited him to come over, and Heywood read a part of the manuscript that night and took it home with him and kept it for a day or two. When he returned it, Henry did not dare ask the other's opinion; but he waited, conscious of a pounding in his throat, for what Heywood should say.

Heywood said politely that he thought "I Speak of Africa" first rate. "It's written," he explained, "as though you felt the glamour and the romance of your subject. Of course, I'm not a critic, but I read it right through, Beeker, and that's the real test, after all."

Henry repeated this comment to Shirley. "I think he really was interested," he said wistfully.

"Of course he was," she insisted.

"There's no 'of course' about it," Henry told her. "I don't know why I should think I could write a novel. But I have had a lot of fun out of it."

"That's the right way to look at it," she agreed. "You've had your fun out of it, even if nothing ever comes of it, Henry."

He felt uneasily that Shirley did not feel that anything ever would come of it. "I'm going to ask Dave Kirconnel to read it," he told her.

"He and Lucy read a great deal," Shirley assented.

So in the course of the summer the manuscript went from hand to hand about the neighborhood, and those who read it assured Henry that they liked it very much indeed. "The thing for you to do," Mr. Campion told him, "is to show it to a publisher. I have a friend in one of the publishing houses on the Hill, if you'd like me to give you a letter to him."

"Oh, I kind of hate to bother him," Henry protested. "I guess it's not good enough to amount to anything."

Mr. Campion smiled; and he said hearteningly, "One of the things a young man has to learn, Beeker, is a certain degree of self-confidence. I don't suppose anyone ever did a big job unless they were—call it conceited—unless they were conceited enough to be sure they could. You and I aren't qualified to criticize anyway. We haven't the expert point of view, but it will do no harm to show this to a publisher."

In the early fall Henry was at last persuaded to do so. Mr. Campion made an appointment for him, and Henry took the manuscript, wrapped in brown paper, to the office of a publishing house on Beacon Hill. He was received cordially enough by Mr. Campion's friend there, a man named Callender, not so old as Henry had expected, who wore heavy glasses with a broad black ribbon attached to them and looped around his neck. Henry was not quite sure what formalities were necessary, so he sat in a chair by the other's desk, nursing the package of manuscript on his knees and waiting for Mr. Callender to take the initiative. The other, after a moment's hesitation, said courteously:

"Mr. Campion tells me you have a manuscript to submit to us, Mr. Beeker."

"I don't think it's any good," Henry confessed, and the other smiled.

"That's one extreme," he commented. "Most of the young men who come in here either think their work is beyond comparison or beneath contempt."

Henry smiled, a little more at ease. "I just don't know that I've any right to bother you," he explained. "You see, I've worked on this thing now for a good many years—ten years, I guess—and I can't tell whether it's interesting to other people or not." He confessed honestly, "It's not very interesting to me any more."

"Perhaps you're too familiar with it," Callender assured him. "I think the best thing for you to do is to leave it here and we'll read it and see what we think."

In the end Henry did so. As he was leaving he asked doubtfully: "How long will it be?" and Callender said:

"Well, I can't tell. It may be some time. Are you in any hurry for a decision?"

"Oh no," said Henry quickly. "No, I'm not in any hurry." He laughed uncomfortably. "I guess after I've worked on it ten years I can wait a little while to hear what you think of it!"

"I'll see that you hear from us as promptly as possible," Mr. Callender assured him, and with this Henry took himself away.

He was when he left the office curiously elated, full of unadmitted hopes, and at the same time relieved as though his shoulders were free of a long burden. "Probably nothing will come out of it," he told himself warningly. "You don't want to go to thinking things." But it is hard for any man to control his dreams.

Six weeks later the manuscript came back to him. Mr. Callender wrote a kindly letter. "We found this in some parts extremely interesting," he told Henry. "I regret that it is not quite what we want for our list next spring. This should not prevent your offering it elsewhere. It just happens that we are already planning to publish a set of the works of Mr. Stanley himself, so that your novel would perhaps overburden our list and leave it out of proportion. I wish you every success in offering it elsewhere."

The letter struck Henry with a stunning force. He had, in spite of his common sense, clung to a hope of great things from this novel; and Shirley had to hearten him now.

"Don't you see what he says, Henry?" she pointed out. "He says that it just doesn't happen to be what they want. But he thinks some other publisher will want it."

"I guess it's no good," Henry said hopelessly. "Or they wouldn't let it get away from them."

"I don't think that's it at all," Shirley insisted. "I want you to take it somewhere else."

Henry would not do this, but in the end she did persuade him to another course. She reminded him that David Pell should be able to give an expert opinion on the manuscript; and Henry at her insistence permitted her to pack it up and send it to David in Washington. David wrote to acknowledge its receipt.

"I will not be able to read it right away, Henry," he explained. "Because I'm going to be married next week, and I

shall be away for a month or six weeks after that. But I will read it when I come back and write you all about it." He added: "I wish you could be here for my wedding, but I know how hard it is for you to get away. Please give my affectionate remembrances to Shirley and the children."

Henry was discouraged by this, but Shirley forgot everything else in her interest in David's marriage. "He doesn't even say who he's going to marry!" she said impatiently. "Or anything about her! Isn't that just like a man!"

"We don't know her," Henry pointed out.

"All the more reason he ought to have told us about her," Shirley said in friendly indignation. And she added after a moment, a little ruefully: "I used to think David might marry Mary Day. I don't believe he can be getting anyone as nice as Mary."

The *Tribune* had a dispatch reporting David's wedding; spoke of him as "the rising young novelist and the *Tribune*'s Washington correspondent." Shirley and Henry read it aloud in the evening together.

"I'd like to see old Dave again," Henry said wistfully. "Do you suppose he'll ever come back here to live?"

"Of course he will," Shirley assured him. "He'll resign from the *Tribune* one of these days, and then he'll come home."

"Well," Henry reminded her, "we'll hear from him, anyway, after he's read my novel." He added ruefully, "Poor old Dave! I guess he won't know what to say about it. He won't want to hurt my feelings."

"Well at least," Shirley assured him, "you know he'll tell you the truth, say what he really thinks."

Henry grinned. "If it kills me!" he agreed. "That's Dave!"

2

On election nights the *Tribune*, like the other papers, always published extra editions announcing the returns, and upon a bulletin board in front of the office the votes were reported and tabulated as they came in. The entire staff was expected to be on duty on such occasions, and Henry always enjoyed these nights. During the early evening there was a rush of work as the state returns were tallied and as the local results became manifest; but after this flurry had somewhat passed and there remained only the telegraphic news to be

handled, an atmosphere of leisure was apt to settle upon the office. Baskets of sandwiches and cans of coffee were brought in, and about the city room little groups of men stood or sat together, discussing the election or wandering into other fields.

Henry had no doubt, that year, what the result would be. He was confident from the time of the conventions in June that Roosevelt's election was assured, and he had even, in his loyalty, made small bets here and there with those in the office whose partisanship outran their discretion. He had that night, as the results came in, his hour of triumph, collecting these petty wagers and good humoredly deriding the losers.

By half past ten or eleven at night there was little more to do, but no one went home. There was a train at eleven fifty, which Henry meant to take, and until then he was free. Bob Proctor and Pat Dryden had been writing the successive election stories as each extra went to press; but their task, too, was done, and Bob came and sat down at the copy desk beside Henry. He had, Henry saw, been drinking. Most of the older men in the office drank more or less regularly, and particularly on these occasions; but upon Bob, liquor had the effect of stimulating the man's philosophical side, releasing those finer thoughts and feelings which in the ordinary intercourse of the day's work were usually hidden.

Young Morgan Lewis had come to work on the paper that fall, after being graduated from Dartmouth the preceding June. He was an Illinois man with only college acquaintances in Boston, and Henry had adopted toward him a faintly paternal attitude. Lewis was sober and industrious and intelligent; he showed a commendable diligence, and while he had performed none of the traditional feats by which a young reporter establishes himself in the journalistic world, his routine tasks had been creditably done, and Ben Harris approved of him. Lewis joined Proctor and Henry, and the three talked together for half an hour or more.

Since Dartmouth's football team had beaten Harvard in the new stadium the year before, Dan had been declaring his intention of going to Dartmouth some day; and Henry spoke of this to Lewis now. The young fellow nodded approvingly.

"He'll like it up there," he declared. "It's a great college."

Bob Proctor said thoughtfully, "I never went to college. I started in to work when I was twelve."

"Neither did I," Henry commented. "I was a little older

than that when I started to work, though." He looked up at Lewis, who was sitting on the desk beside him. "I came in here as an office boy," he explained. "This room was just about the same as it is now. When we get into our new building next year it will be different, and I suppose things will change in other ways. There's a change already." He added, with a smile: "You're really a part of it, Lewis. I think you're the first man who's come to work here straight from college, except David Pell, and Dave hadn't really gone through. He'd been sick and lost a lot of time."

"I had to get a living job," Lewis explained laughingly. "The pay is better here than in most other things I could get to do."

"Your college training will do you good here, after a while," Proctor told him. "After you get to the point of writing more stuff. But there are some things you've got to learn first."

Lewis smiled. "I can see that, all right," he agreed.

Proctor drifted into reminiscences. "When I started in the game," he said, "it was a good deal more of an adventure than it is now. I worked in New York one time, on the World. They were always running crusades. They got after the police force once, said a man didn't have any protection in the dives downtown." He chuckled. "They gave me a roll of bills one night—more money than I've ever had before or since!—with instructions to go down and go into a saloon and flash the roll and see what happened to me."

Lewis grinned. "What did happen?" he asked. "Did you get a story?"

"I guess they were tipped off," Proctor confessed. "They didn't even put knockout drops in my drink. I stayed around there for an hour or so, waiting for the lightning to strike, until the bartender closed up for the night." He smiled. "A lot of their stunts worked out about the same way," he confessed. "They got after the management of the ferry lines once. Someone said if a man fell overboard from a night ferry, the boat wouldn't even stop for him. So I had to go out and jump off, on the last trip one night in November. We had a row boat waiting to pick me up, but I wasn't looking forward to getting wet—not in that water! I put on a good show—went out on the back end and yelled that I was going to jump, and hoped somebody would come along and grab me. But they didn't. So finally I went overboard."

"Did the ferry stop?" Lewis asked.

"Sure it stopped," said Bob. "Stopped and backed up, but by that time the row boat had picked me up; and I guess the ferry captain had an idea what was going on, because he certainly baptized us with the finest line of language I ever heard!"

"Those were the heroic days of the game, weren't they," Lewis suggested.

"Oh, I don't know," Proctor said, a little wearily. "We used to think we were heroes. When we went after a story we didn't stop at anything. Used to climb telephone poles and break in windows and listen at doors and one thing and another, until the average well-trained servant was ready to shut the door in our faces any time. I find I have just about as good success now by ringing the doorbell and asking for what I want. Don't always get it, but as likely to as not."

Henry said a little regretfully, "I never had any very exciting experiences as a reporter. Just chasing fires, and so on. And then I got into the bicycle news and stuck with that as long as we ran a bicycle page."

"They say," Proctor commented, "that there are just as many bicycles around now as there ever were, only people don't use them so much, or something."

"My brother-in-law says there'll be as many automobiles in a few years as there ever were bicycles," Henry told them. "He's working out in Detroit now. I had a letter from him the other day. He claims that they'll make over ten thousand automobiles in this country this year."

"That many won't make much of a showing, if you spread them thin," Lewis commented.

"They're still experimenting," Proctor pointed out. "There's been no real flood of manufacture so far, but there will be, by and by. They're getting them now so a woman can run them as well as a man. That is, if she knows anything about machinery."

"I guess you'll never see many women running them," Henry predicted. "It's too much for a woman to handle. What's she going to do when the things break down?"

"Women are doing a lot of things nowadays they never did before," Lewis suggested.

"They're making up the *Tribune* to appeal to women now," Proctor said wearily. "This sort of thing they print—the bulk of it—is aimed at women. Of course they have baseball news for the men, and business and politics, but it's the

women who eat up murder trials and divorces and that sort of thing."

Henry smiled. "I think Shirley read every word about Mabel Page," he agreed.

Proctor nodded. "I suppose it'll come to the point where there won't be anything left in the paper for a man except the sporting pages." He laughed mirthlessly. "When I started in this game," he said, "I used to think of it as an adventure. I had a sort of a mental picture of newspaper men enlightening the world, like the Statue of Liberty. I suppose most young men have the same idea, more or less. I suppose they think they're going to go out and teach people something, guide public opinion, even if it's only among their neighbors."

He laughed again, and resentfully this time. "Now it's coming to the point where all we're asked to do is collect gossip so that women will have something new to talk about."

"I think men read the murder trials just the same as women," Henry protested. "You watch them on the trains."

"They read them because it's all they can get," Proctor retorted. "And of course, if you read enough of that sort of thing, you get a taste for it. But it's darned small business for a grown man to go scrutinizing the private lives of a lot of degenerates and telling the world about them."

Lewis protested, doubtfully. "But Proctor, you're covering politics. That's a big job—the biggest job on the paper, isn't it? I think it's what I'd like to do sometime."

"Shucks!" said Proctor. "I guess you've never been up on the Hill, have you? Go up there some day and sit in the galleries and listen to a debate in the House. Writing State House news isn't exactly the same thing as chronicling the mental processes of a group of intellectual giants. The average man is elected because he bought more tickets to firemen's balls than his opponent did, or because he can shout louder about the corrupt and stony hearted aristocracy of money, or some other rot. You've only been around here two or three months, Lewis, and I don't know a great deal about you; but I can tell you right now, there aren't a dozen men up there who've got half the brains you have, and you can tie to that."

Lewis said uncomfortably, "I expect you're too close to it, Proctor."

"Too darned close!" Proctor agreed. "I'm sick of it sometimes."

He rose a little wearily and moved away, and Henry

looked after him and so did the younger man. Henry perceived the perturbation in the reporter's eyes, and he said, after a moment:

"You don't want to take Bob too seriously. He may complain, but he wouldn't give up the game for anything in the world."

"I guess there's a fascination in it," Lewis agreed.

"Bob's getting old," Henry explained. "And he's drinking more than he ought to, I suppose. He doesn't mean more than half he says."

"How old is he?" Lewis asked.

"I don't know," Henry confessed. "He looks about the same as he did when I first came here. I don't suppose he's over forty-five."

"He looks older," Lewis agreed.

"A lot of men do, in this game," Henry confessed. "It's hard on them. They play out in the end."

"I wonder if the trouble isn't in their point of view," Lewis suggested.

"I don't know," Henry said thoughtfully. "I've seen other young fellows come in here." He smiled a little. "I'm only thirty-four, but I feel like an old man compared to you. I think the answer is that most youngsters who start in the newspaper business do it with some ideals back of them, with some definite intention of accomplishing something; but after you've been in this game a while, and watch things going on, you see that the world doesn't change much. It's just like politics. The same old row every election, and everybody gets excited, and they argue and call names; but after election is over, it doesn't make any difference. It's mighty easy to get discouraged if you let yourself go."

"But you don't have to," Lewis insisted.

"No," Henry confessed. "No, you don't have to. You don't have to let go." He added thoughtfully: "But after a while, you get mighty tired!"

3

Henry had a letter in February from David Pell. David wrote:

Dear Henry:

I am sending back the manuscript of your novel by express prepaid. I hope it will reach you all right. I read

it very carefully, and it shows a great deal of work and thought. Of course, Henry, writing is a business that has to be learned, unless you're a genius to begin with, and very few of us start off by being geniuses. Looked at as a business, writing means usually a long preparation. When I was a boy at home there were always a lot of books around. My mother used to read aloud to me almost before I could talk, and my father was a great reader, too. I wasn't very well, so that I wasn't able to get around as much as some of the other fellows, and I got in the habit of reading a great deal. Probably it would have been better for me to get out and climb trees, but I didn't do it. There were two or three years when I was in bed a good deal of the time, and I used to read then. I read all sorts of things. I had a tutor for a while in Latin, and I used to read some of the old classics in the original. I picked up enough French to read some French, too, and I read the English masterpieces, and translations of great books in other languages. I've always been a tremendous reader. That's really one of the ways to learn to write.

While I was in school, I used to enjoy the courses where there was writing to do, and what little college work I had was mostly in English composition. Then when I came to work on the paper I had to cover a lot of things that called for writing—banquets, and so on, where they let the stories run to a fair length—so that I did a lot of writing there; and I was writing at home, in my room almost every night. I suppose I'd really been studying writing for fifteen or twenty years before I started my first novel, and I spent a long time on that, and even then it wasn't a very good job. And I went at the second one, and I spent even longer on that and took more pains; and although that's made some success I'm not particularly proud of it. I'm just beginning to find out how much there is to learn about writing.

I'm saying these things, not to discourage you, Henry, but to explain so that you can understand why you couldn't expect to do a first rate job of writing at your first attempt. I know you do a lot of reading now. I know we used to talk about books together, and I'm sure you've kept that up; but you've been on the copy desk now for three or four years, where you don't have any writing to do, and unless you're working outside of office hours, you're not getting much practice.

What I'm trying to explain, Henry, is that it seemed to me your novel wasn't as well written as it ought to be, to be published. It isn't always perfectly clear. The sentences are all very much the same length, so that after you've been reading for a while you feel as though someone had been thumping on your brain with a tack hammer. You use too many adjectives and not enough verbs, and you haven't learned the trick of personifying, giving individuality even to inanimate objects. When you describe a mountain it's just a mountain, and there might be a thousand others like it.

I know you didn't send this manuscript to me for anything but my honest opinion about it. My opinion may not be worth anything. You're better qualified than I am to judge how much my opinion is worth, but here it is, Henry. I think your novel is poorly written. I also think that you unconsciously stuck too closely to facts. After all, you set out to write an imaginative work and not a treatise on Africa. The fact that a thing happened doesn't make it good material for fiction. It is almost true to say that the fact that it happened means that it is not suitable for use in fiction. If it actually happened and is interesting, it's probably so improbable that the reader of fiction won't believe it; and if it actually happened and isn't interesting, it certainly has no place in a novel.

There's not much plot in "I Speak of Africa." You can get along without a plot if you have some characters; but you haven't many characters, Henry. About the only character in the book is your hero, and he's a lay figure. He's too much of a hero. Even a great explorer gets hot in the sun and sweats a little; and if he has the indigestion, he's apt to show some impatience towards his porters. I have the impression that you put the girl in as an afterthought and from a sense of duty. She reminds me—don't take this unkindly—she reminds me of a picture in a package of cigarettes. And outside of these two white people, almost everyone in your book is, in your own words, a "naked savage." Naked savages all look very much alike at a casual view.

There are a good many places in the novel which would be good newspaper writing, but there aren't enough of them. I suppose you want more than an opinion as to the merits of the book. You probably want advice. If you enjoy writing, by all means keep it up. It's a

thrilling and a fascinating business, and you'll get pleasure out of it. I should not advise you to rewrite this novel, however. I think perhaps you're a little tried of it. Try something else. Go on writing, by all means, but read, too. And think more than you read. Think a great deal, and read some, and write a little.

We're at home here now, living in an apartment which is very attractive. Mrs. Pell has heard me speak of you so often that she hopes, as I do, that you and Shirley will sometime come to visit us here. I may be in Boston next fall. I think it possible that when my next book is published I will finally resign from this work here, and if I do so, I hope to come back there to live.

Please give our kindest regards to Shirley and to her father and to your sister and to the children.

Affectionately yours,

David Pell.

Henry read this letter aloud to Shirley, and at the end, after a still pause, Shirley said furiously, "I think he's just conceited and horrid!"

But Henry shook his head. "Dave's right!" he said. "He's put into words the things I really knew were true, without being able to define them."

"What are you going to do, Henry?" she demanded. "Write another novel?"

But Henry smiled stubbornly. "I think he's wrong about that," he said. "I think I can do this one over again and do it better. That's what I'm going to try!"

4

There was a steady broadening of their interests in these years. The community in which they were now established had a definite social organization in which Henry and Shirley found their places. Shirley's health was improving, and the old wound in her heart was somewhat healed. When now and then they spoke of the baby who had died, it was smilingly, with pleasure in the memory. Shirley was developing an increasing interest in clothes. The *Tribune* had begun to give away a dress pattern every Sunday, and continued this experimental innovation for a while; and Shirley and Mary studied these patterns and the fashion notes attentively. Shirley some-

times read aloud a fragment here and there, breaking the usual evening silence as they all sat reading together to inform them that the bodices of evening dresses were lower, that it was becoming fashionable to reveal the neck and chin, that the old leg-o'-mutton had been replaced by sleeves of elbow length with only a modest fullness at the top. Henry liked to laugh at her interest in such small matters. . . .

They were going nowadays more often to the theatre, and in April Henry took his son, as a special treat, to see Robert Edeson in "Strongheart." He and Shirley were by this time formulating definite plans for Dan's future. The play, they thought, would show him what college was like; and Dan remembered that experience for the rest of his life. He was so enthusiastic about it that he insisted upon Shirley's going to see it a week later at a matinee and taking Cynthia. Shirley chose that occasion to wear for the first time a new dress of Alice blue. Cynthia thought Robert Edeson was wonderful, and when she came home she enlisted her aunt's help in designing and manufacturing a football costume for her most robust doll. She cropped the doll's flaxen curls, and renamed it "Thad."

The Heywoods sent their oldest girl away that summer to a camp in Maine, and Henry and Shirley thought of giving Dan a similar experience; but they decided the experiment would be too expensive. Henry's salary at this time was thirty-five dollars a week, a figure which would ten years before have seemed to them like opulence. But in spite of this fact, their expenses had increased, by small degrees, to such an extent that they were saving very little. There were so many things now in the stores which they wished to buy. . . .

So Dan stayed at home. The possibility of his summer in camp had not been discussed with him, so that he was spared this disappointment.

In the fall of that year he entered high school.

VII

Henry had always the feeling that his children matured not by slow degrees, but by sudden starts and leaps ahead. It seemed to him that for long periods of time Dan and Cynthia changed not at all, till there came a day when something called his attention to the fact that Dan had grown an inch or two, or that Cynthia was no longer so thin as she had been in the past. Such moments of change had come when the children first started to school; they recurred, at intervals of two or three years, and upon less provocation.

But when Dan entered high school it seemed to Henry and to Shirley, too, that the change in him was the greatest of all.

He was at that time thirteen years old; a rather slender youngster, quiet and composed except in rare moments of boisterous mirth, and with a dignity which made Henry at times a little afraid of him. But a month in high school at once matured the boy and for a while broke down his composure. He was so enthusiastic about his new surroundings that he became voluble in describing them to his father and mother, and in relating to them and to Clem and his Aunt Mary the events of his days. He had always been inclined to argument; but except when his controversial instincts were aroused he had not hitherto been particularly talkative. Now, it sometimes seemed to them that he talked all the time. When Henry came home from the office he was always tired, and to be met at such times with a flood of conversation from Dan was faintly trying. Henry sometimes exploded, begging Dan for heaven's sake to be quiet for a little while! Dan, at such manifestations, obeyed and held his peace sometimes for as much as thirty seconds; but always some new topic of conversation occurred to him and he broke out again.

He had much to tell them, for the world in which he now moved was new. The high school buildings were in Newtonville, some two miles from their home; and Dan walked to

school every day. He took a lunch with him; and he was gone most of the day, for after his classes play detained him till late afternoon.

"It's almost like having another man in the house," Shirley confessed to Henry. "He leaves a few minutes after you start to the train, and he doesn't get back till just before you do. Of course he was away a good deal of the day, before; but it seems different now."

"Dan himself is different," Henry reminded her. "I think he's grown an inch or two. He's not much shorter than I am, right now. He's going to be a whopper, Shirley!"

She knew how much Henry counted on this, how he had always dreaded that Dan might inherit his own small stature. "So he is," she agreed. "Doesn't seem posible that I'm his mother, sometimes. He's so big all over. Of course he doesn't let me oversee his bath any more; but I did see him undress the other day, and his legs are so fat, Henry!"

"He's maturing," Henry reminded her. "Just at his age there's a big change in a boy."

"I know," she agreed. And she added, with a smile, "You can see a difference in him in other ways. He's become devoted to Helen Kirconnel, this fall. He goes over there almost every evening, when he gets home from school."

"Seems to me he's always here when I get home," Henry protested. "I can hear him talking before I turn the corner into the street."

She smiled. "I like to have him here when you get here," she explained. "I call him home about the time you're coming. I think he needs you, Henry."

Henry cleared his throat, a little embarrassed. "Oh, I don't know that I can do anything for him," he protested. "A boy has to work out his own salvation, more or less."

"He likes to talk to you," she insisted. "He has so many problems, so many questions to ask, Henry."

"Yes, I suppose so," he agreed.

"And he likes to go over to the Heywoods', too," Shirley told him, and Henry laughed at her gently.

"I think you're getting a tremendous thrill out of it," he accused her. "Having a son big enough to run after girls!"

"I am," she confessed happily. "It's wonderful to see your boy growing up to be a man."

"He hasn't reached the stage yet of slicking his hair, anyway," Henry commented.

"He's coming to it," she assured him. "He asked me last

week whether I didn't think it would look better parted in the middle!"

"I never noticed that he parted it at all," Henry declared. "It looks to me as though he slept with it and left it that way. It always kind of shies up on one side."

"He sleeps on his side," she agreed fondly. "He goes to sleep with his head 'way up on the pillow, and then he slides down. And of course he just sleeps like a log all night, so his hair is pushed up on that side, and no amount of brushing will make it stay down."

"You ought to get him some goose grease," Henry suggested laughingly.

"He wets it now," she explained; and she added thoughtfully: "You know, Henry, he spoke to me the other day. I think he's afraid to speak to you. I think he wishes we'd give him an allowance!"

"What does he need an allowance for?" Henry protested.

"Well, he says all the other boys always have some money in their pockets," she explained. "I think he feels a little handicapped. I give him a quarter now and then."

"Well," said Henry, "I guess we can manage that if we have to. How much do you think he ought to have?"

"Oh, I think if he had a quarter a week, regularly, he'd be proud as he could be."

"I'll tell you," Henry suggested. "We'll give him thirty-five cents a week and tell him to put a nickel in the collection at Sunday school, and another nickel in church, and then he can have the rest to spend." He added, weightily: "It's a good thing for a boy to learn something about the value of money. I never thought much about it, until after I began to think about marrying you. I think I started saving to get a bicycle, after the old one was broken up. But it's a good habit for a boy. I think I'll tell Dan that I'll double whatever he saves at the end of the year."

"He's got his bank," she reminded Henry. "But there's nothing in it."

Henry asked curiously, "Is he seeing as much of Thad Gore as ever?"

"Yes," Shirley said. "Yes, he looks forward to Saturday all the week, so that he and Thad can play together. I don't think he sees Thad except on Saturday, and sometimes on Sunday afternoon if he goes over in the woods. The other days he's more apt to go over to see Helen Kirconnel or the Heywood girls, and I think Thad makes fun of him for that."

She added thoughtfully, "It worries me sometimes. Cynt is just wild about Thad, you know. She thinks he's perfectly wonderful, and she trails those two boys around and she'll do anything in the world they dare her to."

"I haven't seen Thad since I don't know when," Henry commented. "He must be pretty near grown by now. How old is he?"

"He must be sixteen or seventeen," Shirley confessed. "That's why it worries me. In Dan's eyes he's a grown man."

"I thought Dan told me Thad ran away from home last spring," Henry suggested.

Shirley laughed. "He did," she agreed. "But the police caught him in Boston, and Dan told me Thad's father gave him a terrible whipping." She added gravely, "He' a curious boy. He's tough and rough on the surface, but there's something about him you do like, in a way. And he thinks of the most amazing games for them all to play."

"Don't he and Dan go to high school together? I should think they'd walk over together," Henry suggested.

"Thad doesn't go to school," Shirley explained. "I don't think the teachers got on well with him. He works. Does odd jobs. He's working now on that new house they're building over on Beacon Street. The Frasers'. I think he's a sort of a carpenter's helper there."

"Doesn't have much time to play on Saturday, does he?" Henry asked.

"I think Dan goes over and watches Thad work," she explained. "And he brings home pieces of lead pipe, and nails, and things. He had a hoard of these treasures down cellar. I think he'd like to be a carpenter, too."

"He'll get over that," Henry reminded her, and she agreed. "Oh yes," she said. "That's only a passing phase."

2

Shirley's father went to work that winter. He did this as a gesture of reproach directed at Henry, and as a result of some frank talk into which Henry was betrayed. Henry had come home one night to find Shirley in bed, traces of tears in her eyes, a great weariness in her countenance. There had been a change of weather that day, with rain which turned to snow, and falling temperature; and when Henry asked Shirley what the matter was, she said weakly:

"When it got cold, Henry, I tried to start the furnace,

and the house filled with smoke, and I couldn't get the fire to burn and I had a frightful time."

He protested resentfully, "Why didn't you get your father to do it?"

"I don't like to bother papa," she explained. "He's so happy to just sit, and he seems so old!"

Henry bridled his tongue. "Well, Mary'd have done it," he insisted. "They're both better able to do that sort of thing than you are, Hon. You're not fair to me! You go ahead and do something and get sick over it and then take it out on me."

"Mary had gone downtown to get some groceries and things," Shirley explained. "She did help me when she came back."

Henry brought a damp towel to lay across her eyes. "That will make them feel better," he said, stifling his resentment. "Where was your father all this time?"

"You mustn't blame him!" Shirley protested.

"Well, he could do something besides sit around," Henry exclaimed. He was worried about her, and this concern on his part took the form of irritation at these others. "I'm sick of having him sit around the house all the time," he declared.

Shirley moved her hand faintly on the coverlet. "I'm not coming down to supper, Henry," she said. "Mary will take care of you." And Henry went presently downstairs.

He was silent at table. Young Dan, as usual, bore the burden of the conversation. He was describing the technical aspects of house construction as he had seen them under Thad Gore's tutelage, and the constant flow of his high-pitched voice jangled Henry's nerves. Clem, at Henry's left hand, ate silently, with that air of patient disapproval which he liked to wear; and Mary, in Shirley's seat at the foot of the table, rose now and then to go into the kitchen to fetch fresh bread or butter, or to replenish the dish of boiled potatoes. By and by Clem leaned back in his chair, and with an air of resentful resignation said bitterly:

"I don't ask a great deal from life, but I do think I might have a water pitcher at my meals. It looks as though a man could have enough water to drink around here."

This was an old complaint with Clem. Shirley never forgot, but Mary had somewhere acquired a prejudice against seeing a water pitcher on the table; so when, as not infrequently happened, Shirley was abed, Clem suffered this small inconvenience from her absence. Ordinarily the old

man's protests only amused Henry, but tonight he was ready to be angry at the least additional irritation, and when Mary rose at Clem's word and turned toward the kitchen, Henry said angrily:

"Sit down, Mary! If he wants water, let him get it himself! It's time he did something around here!"

Mary hesitated, and the children sat white with silence to see what would come of this. Clem looked at Henry with a grave reproach in his eyes.

"Am I a waitress, Henry?" he asked.

Henry was already ashamed of himself, but he would not confess this, had gone too far to retreat. "You're not anything, as far as I can see," he retorted. "You sit around the house all day and expect people to wait on you. You can't even build a furnace fire. You let Shirley work herself sick over it today, and Mary, too, and never lifted your hand."

Clem nodded as though in understanding. "I see you resent my presence here," he said. "Very well, I will go away!"

"No, you won't," Henry told him. "I know that well enough. There's no place for you to go. I don't mind having you here, for Shirley's sake. But, Clem, you ought to help a little when you can. There's no reason why you shouldn't look out for the furnace when I'm away. Every winter it's been the same way. Shirley and Mary have had to shovel coal during the day, and shake the ashes, and take care of the fire. You never do anything unless you're made to."

"I will take measures to satisfy you," Clem said, with a patient dignity.

"All I ask is that you be a little thoughtful," Henry protested. "Not let a couple of women do work that you can do just as well."

"I may not be equal to any hard physical labor," Clem replied. "My strength is not what it used to be. Of course it is true I did a great deal for you and Shirley when I could, Henry. I could do more now, if your brother-in-law had not robbed me as he did. But I suppose it is natural that you should begin to complain now when I am old and dependent. I'll get out and support myself again, if that's what you want me to do."

"I don't want you to do anything of the kind," Henry said. "And you know it!"

"I'll make some arrangement," Clem continued, as though to himself, "to pay my share of the expenses here, if you do not put that share too high. I hope you will consider, Henry,

that my earning power is not what it used to be, at the time when I was able to bear the burden of your establishment as well as my own."

Henry was flushed and uncomfortable, but he stuck stubbornly to his guns. "You're trying to put me in the wrong," he said. "And I'm not going to argue with you. But I'm sick of coming home and finding Shirley all worn out from shovelling snow, or something like that."

The old man bowed his head. "It is unbecoming," he said sonorously, "that harsh words should pass between us. I will say no more."

"Neither will I," Henry agreed, and Mary went and filled the water pitcher and put it by Clem's side.

But two or three days later the results appeared. Clem spoke to Henry, in a polite and friendly tone.

"Henry," he said. "I have made arrangements with Mr. Kirconnel, next door, to become one of his agents. I may not make a success of it. I am a little old to undertake a new profession, and that of insurance salesman is perhaps beyond my powers; but if I do not succeed at that, Henry, I will try something else."

"Now, Clem, there's no sense in that," Henry told him. "You know that wasn't what I meant."

Clem smiled. "I was young myself once," he replied. "I know the point of view of youth, Henry. If you have any further cause to complain of me, it will not be because I have not done my utmost. You can hardly ask me to do more."

Henry, unable to dissuade him, felt miserably guilty, till to his great relief he found that Shirley welcomed this new enterprise on her father's part.

"It makes me feel rotten," Henry told her. "It makes me feel as though I'd been ungrateful or something. I didn't ask him to go to work."

She laughed at him in a gentle way. "Now, Henry," she assured him. "It's going to be the best thing in the world for papa. He's been sitting around the house for so long that he's getting unreasonable. I don't suppose he'll sell any insurance, but it will give him something to do. He's going to go around from house to house and talk to people. He'll enjoy meeting new people. He'll be a lot happier for it, Henry."

She was able in the end to bring Henry some measure of reassurance; but thereafter, during the winter, the subject remained a sore one and the wound was frequently reopened. For Clem, as though conscious of the weapon Henry had put

in his hands, insisted upon going abroad even in the most inclement weather, and he made it a point to come home after Henry's return. This was particularly true when the late afternoons were stormy. Henry's protests had no effect. Clem only smiled his patient smile and persisted, and Shirley had to hearten Henry again and again.

"It's good for him!" she insisted. "He hasn't been so well for years, and when you're not here—he comes home for dinner every day when you're not here—he tells us about people he's seen, and things he's done, and he's really having a good time."

"He'll keep it up," Henry said resentfully, "until he gets sick, and then I'll have the doctor's bills to pay."

"He won't get sick," Shirley assured him. "Papa's never been sick. I never remember him spending a day in bed. And besides, Henry, he's making a little money. He pays me two dollars a week board, now, and he's tremendously proud. He's made a will," she added, smiling mischievously. "He's made a will and left all he owns to you, Henry."

"Darn him!" Henry said. "He'll never forgive me, will he?"

"Oh," she insisted. "Papa isn't doing it to bother you."

But Henry laughed. "Well, I'm not going to be bothered anyway," he promised her. "But that's why he's doing it, just the same!"

3

In February Dan fell off the roof of the new house and broke two ribs. Thad Gore and one of the carpenters carried him home thrugh the woods and put him to bed, and Shirley telephoned for the doctor, while Mary stayed with the youngster and tried to reassure him and to make him believe that he was more frightened than hurt. Dan kept repeating in a terror-stricken way:

"My foot slipped. That was the trouble. There was some ice on the roof and I slipped on it."

"I begged you to be careful," Shirley reminded him, and he said defensively:

"Why, mama, I've been up there hundreds of times. It was just a piece of ice, and I slipped on it. That was all."

When the doctor came, Shirley had to leave the room so that she should not hear Dan's involuntary gasps of pain as the physician prodded his injured side. Dan had fallen, it appeared, no great distance. The roof at that point sloped down

within twelve or fifteen feet of the ground. But he had struck on his side, upon the edge of a mortar box. The doctor applied plaster and directed that Dan stay in bed and in one position, and assured them the mishap would have no ill results. But when he had gone Shirley realized what might have happened, and by the time Henry came home he found her prostrated and nerveless, weeping at Dan's side.

Mary met Henry at the door and told him the news, and he received the word steadily enough. "That so?" he said, in a tone of surprise and interest, but of no great concern. "Where is he?"

"He's in bed," Mary said. "He's got to stay there for a week, and not move."

"Shirley up there?" Henry asked.

"Yes."

Henry hung up his hat and coat deliberately and slowly, so that he had time to compose himself before he went upstairs. He found Shirley rubbing Dan's head, while her tears fell; and Dan looked up at his father in an embarrassed way, and Henry asked cheerfully:

"Well, son, what you been trying to do?"

"I fell off the roof over at the Frasers'," Dan explained.

"I should think you'd be old enough by this time," Henry said jocosely, "to know enough not to fall off a roof. What were you trying to do—a parachute jump?"

"He's terribly hurt," Shirley protested. "I don't see why you make a joke of it."

"Shucks!" said Henry. "Boys are always tumbling around. It's a wonder to me he hasn't broken bones before this. He'll be up and around in a day or two. I think it's a joke on him!"

"But it hurts him," she insisted, and Henry looked at his son and grinned.

"How about it, Buster?" he asked. "Hurt pretty bad?" and he winked at Dan and nodded toward Shirley.

Dan flushed with pride at the suggestion of a secret understanding between them. "No!" he said. "No, it kind of knocked the wind out of me; and it tickled a little when the doctor was working on me. But it didn't hurt."

"You cried!" Shirley insisted.

"I did not," Dan protested. "I just let out a yell so's he'd know he couldn't go too far."

"You've worked that game on me," Henry said laughingly. "I worked it on my father in my time. When he used to start in to lick me for something, I always yelled as though he

were killing me. I found if I kept my mouth shut and didn't make any sound, he laid it on all the harder, got madder all the time!"

"Sure!" said Dan.

Shirley looked at her son doubtfully. "But doesn't it hurt terribly now?" she insisted.

"I can't hardly feel it," Dan insisted. "Looks to me I'm going to have it pretty easy, lying here and having you feed me!"

"Don't you believe it," Henry told him. "We'll let you stay there till morning, but after that I wouldn't wonder if you had to come downstairs and take care of yourself, or go without!"

Shirley frowned at Henry, forgetting grief in anger. "Henry, you sha'n't talk to him so brutally," she exclaimed. "He's hurt, and I'm going to take care of him every minute of the time."

Henry grinned fondly. "Well, of course, if you want to," he conceded. "I suppose it's none of my business. But he's perfectly able to get around, aren't you, Dan?" and he winked at his son again.

"Sure!" Dan agreed.

"I'm going down and get your supper right now," Shirley said, and with another defiant glance at Henry she started toward the door. Henry let her go, but when they were alone he sat down where Shirley had been sitting, and he too touched Dan's head, diffidently and awkwardly.

"Pretty tough, is it, son?" he asked.

"Hurt pretty bad at first," Dan confessed.

"We mustn't scare your mother," Henry reminded him.

"Sure, I know," said Dan.

Ten days later Dan was back at school. He told them, when he came home that Thad had run away again. "His father licked him terribly," he explained. "He blamed Thad because I fell off the house, and Thad ran away. He's been gone a week now. I guess he's gone for good."

He recited this bit of news at the dinner table. Henry said in an interested tone, "Is that so? I wonder where he's gone."

"I don't know," Dan confessed.

"Well, I'm glad he's gone," said Shirley. "He'd have killed you before he was through, Dan. I always knew he'd get you in trouble some day."

They had paid no particular heed to Cynthia, but at Dan's word her eyes had widened and her cheek turned pale and her mouth opened. Now, without warning, she burst into a

woebegone wail. They looked at her with astonishment, and Shirley asked:

"Why, what's the matter, Cynthia? Did you bite your cheek?"

Cynthia shook her head, unable to speak.

"Well, what is the matter, then?"

"I'm so s-sorry about Thad," Cynthia replied.

Shirley said indignantly, "Don't be absurd!"

But Henry, after a moment, got up and went to Cynthia's side to comfort his daughter in this grievous hour.

4

Even after Dan was apparently as well as ever and back at school again, Shirley's misgivings on his account persisted; and Henry had repeatedly to comfort and reassure her. While he sustained this burden, he himself was worried, too. It seemed to him that Dan did not regain the weight he had lost while he was in bed; and the boy had a faint but persistent cough, although he seemed to be free from any trace of cold. Henry tried to find mental relief in attacking once more his discredited novel. Instead of beginning to write another one, it seemed to him wiser to seek to correct the faults pointed out by David Pell; but the task was vaguely discouraging. Since David had indicated his errors Henry could see them so plainly; and to remedy them presented obstacles at times almost insuperable.

There were in the office at this time matters to enlist his interest. Marty Bull had come back on the *Tribune*. A year or so before he had resigned and gone west to work; and after some wanderings, chance brought him to San Francisco a week before the earthquake there. Out of a job at the time, he sent a telegraphic query to Ben Harris, as a result of which the *Tribune* had his first hand story of the catastrophe itself and of the confusion which followed. On the strength of that achievement Marty now returned to Boston and resumed his old place on the staff; and a day or two after his return he told Henry that he had seen Harry Coster in San Francisco. Henry was surprised and interested.

"You did?" he echoed. "How is he? How's he looking?"

Bull chuckled. "Down and out, I should say," he replied. "He looked like a bum to me. But he still talks just as big as he ever did."

Henry smiled. "You know," he said. "My father-in-law still expects Coster to come back with a fortune some day. He's been waiting for it for years."

"He's got a long wait coming," Bull retorted sardonically. "Coster borrowed five dollars off me." And Henry nodded.

"I guess he'll never be any good," he soberly agreed.

The *Tribune* was by this time housed in its new building, completed some eighteen months before; and the conditions under which Henry worked were somewhat changed for the better. With these physical changes there came also modifications in the organization of the office staff. Harry Thaw would go on trial in April of that year, and Fred Cook, assigned one day to write an advance story calculated to renew public interest in the case, went to the reference department for clippings dealing with the murder of White. He had some difficulty in finding the items he wanted, and appealed irately to Ben Harris.

"That reference department is no good at all," he told Ben. "It's in an awful mess right now. It needs someone in there with a head for organization, Ben; not just an office boy. Young Drummond does the best he knows how, but he's not up to it."

Harris nodded. "I'l see what I can do," he promised, and what he did struck Henry with a curious force.

Harris put Pat Dryden is charge of the reference department. It seemed to Henry there was tragedy in this. Dryden had always been an heroic figure in Henry's eyes, and still remained so. His career was to Henry an epitome of all that a newspaper man might justly hope to be or to become. That this man should be reduced now to the reference department had something pitiful about it. Henry had a swift mental picture of old Peter Hendricks clipping his papers there, maundering about his desk. Henry himself, a boy not yet risen to the status of a reporter, had succeeded Peter, and had done the work well enough; and since then there had been other boys, of whom Dell Drummond was the latest. That Pat Dryden should be given an office boy's work to do seemed to him so atrocious that he ventured, with the familiarity of old acquaintance, a protest to Ben.

"Putting Pat in the reference?" he cried. "Why, Ben, Pat's a great newspaper man! There's nothing to keep him busy there."

Harris hesitated for a moment. "It's a job, Henry," he said at length. "And Pat's getting old!"

"He's as good as he ever was," Henry insisted. "And there's nothing for him to do in the reference."

"His head may be as good," Ben agreed; "but his legs aren't." And he added, almost with relief, "Besides, Henry, the reference department is mighty important. It needs to be kept in order, so we can get things quickly when we want them. We need a good man there, and Pat can do it."

"I think it's a darned shame," Henry protested; and Harris hesitated, thought a moment, and then said:

"Well, Henry, Pat hasn't kicked!"

His eyes met Henry's, and there was something in those of the older man so rueful and so sad that Henry was silenced, and turned at last away. But for weeks thereafter he could not meet Dryden face to face without flushing at the other's shame.

In February of that year a change occurred of more direct importance to Henry. Mat Barker had been making up the paper with Charlie Niblo to help him; but Charlie, while one of the best fellows in the world, had no real ability and Mat Barker at last spoke quietly to Ben Harris to this effect. Ben, casting around the office, decided to give Henry Charlie's job.

"Think you can swing it?" he asked.

Henry, who had never felt called upon to look up to Charlie Niblo, nevertheless contemplated the possibility that he himself should occupy this same position with a little awe. He remembered abruptly that he had once dreamed of being some day a make-up man, on the road to those heights to which he aspired.

"I guess I can," he told Ben, more bravely than he felt. "It may take me a week or so to get on to it, but I guess I can swing it in the end."

Harris hesitated for a moment, as though doubting his own wisdom. "All right," he said at last. "Go to it. And the best of luck to you, Henry."

Henry nodded, affecting an indifference he did not feel.

That night he talked long with Shirley, thinking aloud, reviving his ancient dreams and setting them in order before her; and she listened fondly. "I'm glad they've realized what you're worth at last, Henry," she said.

He found the new work engrossing. The mechanical details of arranging the pages of the paper were strange and new and fascinating, and he plunged into the business with an almost youthful zeal. In March of that year, when J. F. Drayton, the owner of the *Tribune,* died, there was a good deal of

uncertainty in the office as to the effect this would have upon the fortunes of the paper and of the individuals employed there.

But Henry had no concern. He felt himself in his new work secure.

VIII

That spring Henry and Shirley felt an increasing anxiety over Dan's cough. The boy had none of the symptoms of a cold, yet there seemed to be a persistent irritation in his throat which bothered him. Sometimes he coughed at night. Henry still slept in a small bed in the room above the front door, but when, as occasionally happened, Shirley got up to go in to Dan and see what she could do for him, Henry used to join her; and afterward, when Dan was quiet again, he would go back to bed with Shirley and stay there until she went to sleep once more.

He had at such times to reassure her. One night, waiting thus beside her, he heard a low sound which told him she was crying, and he said quickly: "Shirley, there's nothing to worry about."

"I know it, Henry," she agreed. "I'll be all right in the morning. It just bothers me, waking up at night this way. I get to imagining things. I was really asleep and I had a bad dream. I woke up crying, that was all."

He laughed and took her head upon his shoulder. "I know," he agreed. "Things always look black at night anyway. But he's just got a little tickle in his throat or something."

"He's perfectly well," Shirley repeated, assuring herself as much as him. "There's nothing the matter with Dan."

"Of course there isn't," Henry said; and he added, in an effort to divert her attention: "I'm a good deal more worried about you than I am about Dan, Shirley. You're not looking so well lately."

Henry was not sincere in this. It was, so far as he was concerned, pure artifice; and Shirley's answer gave him for a

moment a shock of fear. "I haven't felt so well, Henry," she confessed.

He waited till his voice was steady. "What's the matter, Shirley?" he asked. "Tired?"

"I don't know exactly," Shirley told him. "Nothing, I guess. Just my imagination, or maybe worrying about Dan. I seem to have a kind of indigestion. After I've eaten something I feel as though I were full of worms, inside."

"That's nerves," he assured her.

"I suppose it is," she agreed. "Just nervousness. I try not to pay any attention to it, but sometimes I have a little pain. But it doesn't really bother me, Henry."

Henry lay very still, but unconsciously he tightened his arm about her. "Sure," he repeated. "It's just nerves, and worrying about Dan."

"We're silly to worry, aren't we?" she asked, and he said heartily:

"Of course we are. Nothing the matter with him. He's on the go all the time. A big husky like him! There's nothing the matter with you, either, except you're so wrapt up in Dan that when you worry about him it makes you sick."

"We won't let anything happen to him, will we, Henry?" she begged, and he laughed at her.

"Now stop it!" he commented. "You're just talking yourself into a spell. Stop it and go to sleep. Everything will look all right to you in the morning."

This, time after time, proved to be the case. Everything did seem all right in the morning; and their days went on pleasantly enough, only shadowed now and then by Dan's recurrent cough.

One day early in May, Cynthia got a letter from Thad Gore. It had been mailed in Liverpool, and she read it aloud to Henry and Shirley. Henry was somewhat astonished by that letter. He had seen little of Thad, had known the boy largely through Shirley's eyes. It had not occurred to him that Thad might have any finer qualities, but this letter revealed them. Thad wrote to Cynthia in terms of half ashamed affection.

"I thought you might like to know how I was getting on," he said, and he explained that when he ran away from home, it was to join the crew of a tramp steamer then loading in Boston; and he proceeded, describing his experiences in the forecastle and on the crossing so vividly that Henry was impressed.

"Gorry, that's surprising," he said to Shirley, when they were alone.

"I don't think so," she protested. "It's just the sort of thing Thad would do. He's a wild, rough boy!"

"I mean, how well he writes," Henry explained. "Where does he get that?"

"Well, of course, his father is an intelligent man," Shirley pointed out. "I've talked with him about Thad. He's a Maine man, and he talks very well, and Thad is a cross to him."

"I guess he doesn't understand the boy," Henry suggested. "Probably too stern with him! Thad's got something in him. Did you notice what he said about that night when they had the sunset? And the way he described the man he had the fight with? You could see that man, Shirley. Wouldn't it be funny if Thad turned out to be a writer."

"He's a great deal more likely to turn out to be a pirate," Shirley retorted. "Running off to sea that way."

"Funny he should write to Cynthia," Henry suggested. "You'd expect him to write to Dan."

"Cynthia used to follow him around like a slave," Shirley explained. "That's why I was so glad when he ran way. She was beginning to idolize him. He was a regular hero in her eyes."

"He'll be more of a hero now," Henry reminded her. "Running off to sea."

"I don't believe he ran off to sea at all," Shirley declared.

"Well, the letter was mailed in Liverpool," Henry pointed out, literally.

"That doesn't make any difference," Shirley said. "Thad was always playing some game or other of make-believe. This is just as likely as not to be all a part of some game of his."

Henry was a little puzzled by Shirley's attitude, but they heard no more from Thad for the time; and since he had sent no address, Cynthia could not write to him. So the matter was forgotten; forgotten in other concerns, for in June Shirley at last decided that they ought to take Dan to a doctor, and Henry, reluctantly, dreading what the physician might say, consented to this. He was tremendously relieved at the doctor's verdict.

"Nothing the matter with him at all," he said. "Except perhaps he's been working too hard in school. Head of your class, are you, young man?"

"He was fourth from the top this year," Henry said proudly. "And he was out of school for a while besides."

"You ought to take him away this summer and give him a rest," the doctor told Henry. "Where are you going for your vacation?" Henry had not thought of going anywhere and said so. "Take him down to the shore," the doctor advised. "If I were you, I'd go to Provincetown. I've spent five summers down there now, or rather my family has, and I go down on week ends. You can rent rooms very reasonably, and a couple of weeks lying around on the sand will make him as right as rain."

After some hesitation, they accepted this advice, in so far as it was practicable. They were unable to get accommodations in Provincetown during Henry's vacation, which fell in the last two weeks in August. The place at that time was crowded with tourists, there to see Roosevelt lay the cornerstone of the Provincetown monument. But they went down for the last week of Henry's vacation—he and Shirley and the two children, leaving Mary and Clem to keep house—and Shirley and the children stayed for another week after Henry came home. They returned browned by the sun and full of exuberant reminiscences, and Henry and Shirley decided they need no longer worry about Dan.

2

The death of Mr. Drayton, the owner of the *Tribune* had resulted in no very far reaching changes in the organization of the office. Drayton had retired some years before from active supervision of the paper's policies, leaving them in the hands of Lewis Peacock, a white haired little man, with a habit of teetering back upon his heels when he spoke, who liked to walk around the city room in his shirt sleeves, with his hands in his pockets, his eyes alive to all that went forward there. Peacock continued in control, and the ownership of the paper passed first into the hands of trustees and then into those of a group of associates, impersonal and remote from the lives of the men upon the staff. Peacock personified them, in Henry's mind and in those of the other employees.

Henry was very much absorbed this year in the responsibilities of his new work, helping Mat Barker make up the paper. He was conscious of the fact that he was not always successful in this task. Barker had occasional moments of irrita-

tion at errors Henry had made, and Henry tried diligently enough to remedy them and to avoid similar mistakes in the future. He confessed to Shirley one night that he found it difficult to master the details of the work.

"You have to change the headlines, for instance," he explained. "I can do them with a paper and pencil, but we have to do them in type, and it bothers me. I don't get the words right. Sometimes I get the two lines wrong side up." He laughed ruefully. "I did that today," he explained, "and you ought to have heard Barker swear!"

"I'm glad I didn't hear him!" Shirley said indignantly. "I don't see how you can let him swear at you, Henry."

"Oh, he didn't mean anything by it," Henry assured her. "It was just blowing off steam. Barker's all right. I get along with him fine."

Ben Harris asked Henry one day whether he enjoyed the work; and Henry said enthusiastically: "Yes sir. Yes, I like it a lot. I'm learning something all the time."

"Bother you, does it?" Harris inquired in a kindly tone.

"No," Henry said. "No, only it takes time to learn some of the things. But I'm getting on to it."

"Barker says you make some bad bulls now and then," Harris suggested, and Henry had a momentary tremor at the other's tone.

"Well, I suppose I do," he confessed. "But I make less of them all the time. Of course it's all new to me." He hesitated and added, "I'm not trying to make apologies, Ben. If I can't do the work, of course you'll want to put someone else on there. But I think I'll get hold of it in a week or two."

"Oh, you're doing all right," Harris assured him. "You go ahead. You don't want to mind the way Mat talks. He doesn't mean anything."

Henry smiled. "I know that," he agreed. "And it's a liberal education to hear him. He covers territory I never even heard of, when he gets good and mad."

Harris grinned, and for a time the matter ended there. But one morning in December, when Henry reported for work, he found a note in his box saying that Harris wished to speak with him, and when he went to the editor's desk, Harris looked up and said:

"Oh hello, Henry. Say, Hank, do you know anything about politics?"

Henry was so surprised by this that for a moment he could

not speak. "Why, I read the papers," he replied. "And of course I always have known David Pell pretty well, and I learned a lot from him. Why?"

Harris hesitated, and Henry added, "I know Hubbard. I sat right across the table from him at a banquet I covered one night last year; and of course I've heard Guild speak. And I know the representative from Newton."

"Think you could handle the State House job for a while?" Harris asked abruptly, and Henry flushed with a quick and flooding delight.

"Yes, I know I could, Ben," he said eagerly. "I know I could if I had a chance. That's the sort of thing I've been working toward ever since I started in on the paper. That's the sort of thing I've always wanted to do. It looks to me that's what a newspaper is for. I mean to say, of course, people buy it to read everything in it, but I think you can do more good, writing politics, than any other way. You remember Tom Pope, the way people used to go by what he said?"

Harris did not smile at this. He only nodded. "Yes," he said thoughtfully. "Yes, I remember old Tom."

"But what's the matter with Bob Proctor?" Henry asked.

"Well," said Harris. "Bob's kind of gone to pieces. I've noticed lately that there was something loose up there, and Bob's acted kind of queer." He shoved back his chair, nervously shifting the papers on his desk. "He had a breakdown day before yesterday," he explained. "He has to go to a sanitarium for a while."

"A sanitarium?" Henry repeated. "What kind of a breakdown, Ben?"

"Well, I don't know. I guess his mind is affected," Harris said evasively.

"Crazy?" Henry asked, and Harris laughed uncomfortably.

"A lot of us go that way, Henry, you know," he said in a warning tone. "This is a tough game. You work at high pressure all the time. If you don't die young, you're apt to go crazy." He looked across the room and his eye fell on Pat Dryden, behind the grill in the reference department. "Or take charge of the reference," he added bitterly.

"Say, that's terrible, isn't it," Henry commented. "Bob's a fine fellow!"

"Oh, he may come out all right," Harris said. "I don't know. You can't tell. Sometimes a couple of months' rest, and everything's fine. But he's not going to be able to work for a while, anyway, and I don't know who to send up there. I tried

Marty Bull once, you remember; but he got in wrong right away. And Charlie Niblo isn't up to it, I'm afraid. He can't write. And we need Fred Cook on the rewrite desk. If you can swing it, Henry, you're the man."

"I kind of hate to step into Bob's shoes," Henry said ruefully. "I like Bob mighty well."

"Oh you're not stepping into his job," Harris assured him. "If he comes back, of course he can have it any time. He's done good work up there."

"You'll have to give Barker some one to take my place," Henry pointed out, and Harris drew his hand across his mouth, half smiling.

"Well, I guess Charlie Niblo can take another crack at that," he replied. "Until we can get somebody that will suit Mat better."

"I don't feel that I really satisfied Mat," Henry confessed. "I kind of hate to give up on that. I'd like to stick there until I've mastered that job, Ben; but of course I wouldn't miss this chance."

"I think you're better suited to the State House job," Harris told him. "You can make people like you, and that's the main thing up there. Of course the other men in the press room will work with you and see that you get the stuff, and you'll make friends; and that will take care of it. And I know you can write anything we need."

"It certainly is great for me," Henry assented.

At home that night he talked long with Shirley, exulting over this new opportunity; and without any vainglory, but rather with a sober perception of the truth, he drew a moral from the episode.

"You know," he told her, "Marty Bull is really the right man for the place, but Marty had a chance on it years ago, and he fell down." He added thoughtfully, "Marty is a brilliant reporter, Shirley. He's got a lot more natural ability than I have. He can get stories, and he knows how to write them properly. If he had stuck to it the way I have, I'll bet he'd be the managing editor by now." He added, with a little laugh, "I haven't got any particular ability, but I have stuck to it, Shirley."

She said loyally: "You're smarter than Marty Bull or any of them. It's just that you've never had a chance, till now, to show what you could do. When you used to run the bicycle pages, they were wonderful; and look at the bicycle stories now!"

"Well," Henry pointed out, "nobody's very much interested in bicycles now. They're all talking about automobiles. There'll be an automobile page the first thing you know."

"Well, I don't care," Shirley retorted. "I liked to read what you wrote about cycling."

Henry returned to his theme. "Watching a man like Marty," he said thoughtfully, "you can see how much more important it is to stick to a thing, can't you? I think you can get further if you make the most of what ability you have, than you can by having a lot of gifts and not using them. Marty's always shifting around from one paper to another, or from one city to another."

He added gently, "Of course he's not married, either, Shirley. And that makes a big difference. I never would have got anywhere if I hadn't been married to you."

"You would, too," she told him. "You'd have gotten along a lot faster, probably, if you hadn't had us hanging on your coat sleeves."

"Don't you believe it," Henry insisted tenderly. "Besides, you haven't hung on my coat sleeves. You've been pushing me forward, all the time. I wouldn't have amounted to anything without you, Shirley."

"You can't make me believe that," she said.

He returned to Marty Bull. This topic fascinated him, and he went over the same ground again and again, Shirley not replying. He said at last, laughing a little at himself: "I suppose the answer is that I'm so tickled at beating him out. But I can't help being pleased. He's never been a very good friend of mine." Shirley made no comment, and he asked doubtfully:

"Do you think I'm fat-headed to feel that way, Shirley?"

She still did not reply, and he realized at last that she had gone to sleep there by his side.

So he left her and went into his own room; but he lay long awake that night, looking forward to the new work which awaited him; to the new tasks which represented in so great degree the realization of his dreams.

IX

Henry thoroughly enjoyed the process of getting acquainted at the State House, and of familiarizing himself with the routine of his work there. It gave him a pleasant sense of importance to step into the galleries and listen to the debates, futile and long winded and aimless as they often were, which went forward on the floor of the House or Senate; and he never overcame or outgrew a complacent and harmless self-satisfaction when he walked past the door keeper at the entrance to the House lobby, or into the Senate chamber.

David Pell had warned him, years before, that the business which went forward here, and the men who attended to the state's affairs were deserving of no great reverence for their abilities. But Henry respected the offices they held. A member of the Senate was from the first in his eyes a man to be treated with deference, and this was true to a great extent of members of the House as well. He was not long in perceiving that, as David had said, the general average of intelligence was low; but he found, too, that there were, even in the House, half a dozen men of commanding personalities and of outstanding ability in whose hands lay the direction of affairs.

David, he thought, had been wrong in looking contemptuously upon these men; and Henry set himself with a certain zeal to study the functionings of the state machinery and to discover beneath the surface of affairs matters which escaped the attention of the more experienced and hence more sophisticated reporters.

The press room delighted him. It was pleasant to have there a desk and a locker of his own; and he liked to listen to the discussions and the reminiscences of the older men, some of whom had been on this assignment for years. He enjoyed, too, the leisurely intervals between their busy hours. About the middle of each afternoon a game of fan tan was apt to start, and as men finished their work for the day they would join in it. Henry did not at first take a hand in this game. He

had vague fears of the perils of gambling, and he had by long habit acquired a natural thriftiness which made the possibility of losing money over the turn of a card a frightful and appalling thing. But after a time he perceived that the stakes were so low as to be unimportant, and he came to enjoy the game.

The work was not difficult. It is true that no one man could have covered all that went on in the big building; but the men worked together, protecting one another, and they made his early days easy for Henry, till he was able to do his share with them.

One effect of his new preoccupation was to make Henry a little scornful of all news not political. When Harry Thaw's trial closed with a verdict of innocent because insane, Henry read no more than the headlines. It seemed to him that persons who wasted time on such matters were light minded. He told Shirley that night:

"That's one of the troubles with this country. They don't pay enough attention to their government. Nobody reads the routine news from the State House. If they did, things would be different up there. If everybody was watching what the representatives were doing all the time, you'd see a different type of men in the House."

And he added, confessing his secret hope: "I want to be able to handle the news up there so's to make it interesting, Shirley. I'd like to think that I've gotten people into the habit of reading State House stuff and following what goes on. I think that's one way a newspaperman can do a lot of good, if he wants to."

Shirley smiled in dreamy agreement with him. She always listened tenderly to Henry when he spoke of these things so near his heart; never discouraged him, never suggested to him that that for which he longed was beyond his powers. She had the deep and kindly wisdom of women who love.

Henry at first threw himself into this work in the spirit of a crusader, and the men in the press room found amusement in watching him. He had perforce to endure disillusionment. One day he wrote and sent to the office by messenger a three column account of a debate on a public utilities bill which seemed to him vital and important; but though the subject matter under discussion might be important, it was not particularly interesting, and Henry found his story cut, before it reached the columns of the *Tribune*, to a scant two sticks. He held his tongue, concealed the shocking effect of

this blow, and characteristically decided that it had been his fault.

"If I had the ability to make that story good reading, they'd have printed it," he told himself. "And I ought to be able to. The stuff's there, if it's handled right."

So in his ambition to discover interest in the routine business of the state and to make that business interesting to his readers, Henry practised on the one hand the art of writing, and on the other he devoted long hours to familiarizing himself with all that went forward here. He made the curious discovery—a discovery which at first surprised him—that these dull routine affairs were of engrossing interest to the men who were engaged in them; that in the eyes of the administrator of widows' pensions, the widows' pensions were the most important concern of the state; that from the point of view of the attorney general's department the legal aspect of any given matter was immensely more vital than its substance; and that to the door keeper of the House the very welfare of the Commonwealth hinged upon his zeal in seeing that no persons unauthorized were permitted entrance to the lobby. Since Henry forced himself to be interested in matters which interested all these men, they liked him. So though his work along this line was not to lead to any tangible result of the sort he hoped to achieve, it did make him many friends.

In the process of getting acquainted with the various departments he heard one day in the attorney general's office a curious bit of news. One of the assistants said to him:

"I've been working on an affair that might make a story for you, but we've agreed not to give it out to the papers."

Henry asked: "What is it?"

He was surprised to learn that it concerned Cy Malgrave. Malgrave, it appeared, had become involved in sharp practice of an unethical sort, and disbarment proceedings against him had been contemplated.

"He came to see us and begged off," his informant explained. "He asked us to keep it quiet and drop the matter, and he promised to get out of the state if we'd let it rest. I think he's going to Syracuse to practice there."

"I used to know him," Henry said thoughtfully. "He lived near me for years." And he added, with a rueful smile: "Did some legal work for me. Handled my sister's divorce and my father-in-law's bankruptcy."

"He appears to be a shrewd chap," the other agreed. "But just a little too sharp, too anxious to make money quickly."

"I never really liked him," Henry remembered. "I was always a little uncomfortable with Cy. He had a way of grinning at you as though he could tell you a joke on yourself if he chose."

"I suppose he'll go on in the same way," the other man commented. "But the boss decided to give him a chance, to let him get away clean from here, anyway."

Another day, Henry ran into Will Gallop. Henry had never thought highly of Will, in spite of the fact that Mary Day married him. Will seemed a dull, stolid, and uninteresting man; but Henry found to his astonishment that Will was a member of the House of Representatives, and the two renewed their old acquaintance there. Gallop's official career was not of a sort to lend itself to publicity. He attended the sessions, he was usually to be seen in his seat or in the lobby outside the door; and he listened attentively to the occasional debates. He fulfilled his unimportant committee assignments and voted when his name was called; but though he served two terms in the legislature, Henry never detected the man in the act of taking any active part in the deliberations which went forward there.

Yet he came to like Will, in an indifferent, somewhat condescending way; and the result was a renewal to some small degree of the ancient contact between Shirley and Mary. Henry and Shirley had dinner with the Gallops one night, and later they returned the courtesy; and Mary occasionally came over to spend an afternoon with Shirley. Henry thought her little changed. She was as pretty, in a more mature way, as she had formerly been. Her eyes were as bright and her tongue as quick, but now and then she made him vaguely uncomfortable; and analyzing this sensation he at length realized that it was because her raillery, which had formerly been friendly and good natured, was now edged with a curious bitterness. He spoke of this to Shirley one night.

"It's because they've never had any children," Shirley told him. "Mary wanted them so desperately, and she's been miserable because they didn't come. And seeing our children makes it worse for her." She added regretfully:

"It would all have been so different if she had married David Pell."

"There never was a chance of that," Henry commented. "She was too—too vivacious for Dave. Made him uncomfortable."

"She'd have settled down, been a good wife to him," Shirley insisted. "It was a great disappointment to me."

"Well," said Henry. "We'll have to see more of them, try to cheer her up!"

But Shirley shook her head. "I don't believe we could ever be the friends we used to be," she replied. "It's almost as though she blamed me because I have children and she hasn't any."

Henry did not wholly agree, but Shirley proved in this respect a true prophet, and their temporary intimacy with the Gallops slackened and died away.

Curtis Guild was serving his final term as governor that year, and since Henry's work took him daily to the governor's office, an acquaintance between them developed and the older man very quickly found something appealing and likeable in Henry. It did not occur to Henry that this was the case. He was absorbed in the professional aspects of their contacts and he was tremendously surprised when the governor offered him a small appointment. The salary would be twice that which he was getting, but Henry without any hesitation declined the offer, and explained his reasons.

"The newspaper game is poorly paid," he confessed. "But after you've been in it all your life you fall in love with it, and there's a chance to accomplish something in it, sir. I think I'd rather stick to it."

He realized that this refusal had the aspect of ingratitude, and he added hastily: "I'm much obliged to you. I never expected such a thing."

This incident increased the governor's liking for Henry, and though their contacts were interrupted by Guild's long illness, the latter had a good memory, and he later did Henry a service. When the time approached for the presidential convention in June, he wrote a letter to Ben Harris, urging that Henry be among those dispatched by the *Tribune* to cover the convention.

"I assume of course that he will go," he said. "But in case you had not intended sending him, I should like to urge you to do so. He has a confidence of those of us who know him, and he will be a valuable man for you there."

Guild was a potential candidate for the vice-presidential nomination, and also there was an alliance between him and Mr. Peacock, the publisher. So his word had weight; and Harris, although he had never before considered the possi-

bility, did as a result give Henry the assignment. The experience was a high light in Henry's life. He found it difficult to maintain the dispassionate attitude expected of him, and was betrayed into jumping to his feet and taking a hand in the tremendous third term demonstration in the convention hall when Roosevelt's name was mentioned. But that emotion passed and left him resigned to Taft's candidacy.

During the more tedious passages in the convention's business, Henry, from his seat among the other newspaper men, liked to look from face to face, along the floor below him. He derived from a scrutiny of these countenances a curious sense of the bigness of the United States. Born in Boston, Henry had never, except for his trip to Detroit, ventured outside New England; and he had no clear conception of the fact that New England was, after all, only a corner of the country. It seemed to him now as he looked about the convention hall that the delegates differed as races differ; and it interested him to remark these racial characteristics. He saw the unmistakable wide mouth and steady chin of the Irish; the broad cheek bones of the Scandinavian; the flat, sandy-colored faces of the Welsh; the sallow cheeks and curiously loose lips of the Hebrews; and the aquiline features of the conventional southerners; and here and there a darker skin testified to Italian blood, and here and there were Negroes.

There was even a difference in dress. Henry, for the first time in his life, saw the broad black hat which was a part of the political uniform of the middle-westerner; and there was above all a difference in manner, which Henry sought in his own mind to analyze and to define. The voices of the westerners were loud and exuberant, they had enthusiasms and expressed them, and they spoke of their home states with the ardor of zealots. Henry now and then passed among them, heard their talk or talked with them. He heard that Kansas could feed the nation, his ears were filled with fabulous tales of riches dug from the ground in Idaho or in Colorado, and he was amused to discover that among a certain group the chief boast was the climate of their native land. They talked, he thought, as though they had personally arranged this climate of theirs.

In this group, to his astonishment, Henry one day encountered Harry Coster. Harry was curiously unchanged. One had to look closely to discover upon him the marks of wear and tear. He was as big, as erect, as booming, and as confident as ever; and even more exuberant. At their last en-

counter Harry had been somewhat humbled; he was at that time seeking to borrow money for his Klondike adventure. But now his manner was all confidence, and even the sight of Henry did not in the least abash him. When they met, Henry was embarrassed for the other man, and he said a little uncomfortably:

"Well, Harry! What are you doing here?"

Coster clapped him on the shoulder staggeringly, and Henry was dazed and almost deafened by the resulting flow of words. Coster, it appeared, had given up the Klondike as a false alarm; had moved southward to California and begun afresh. The earthquake, he assured Henry, wiped out all his prosects and left him penniless; but since then he and San Francisco had risen from the ashes, and Henry got a curious mental picture of Coster and the city thus rising hand in hand, like brothers. He said once, when the other paused for breath:

"You always were enthusiastic, Harry," and Coster cried:

"Exactly! And they appreciate enthusiasm in California!"

He had no time to go into specific details of his life there, but Henry gathered that he was a success, if not financially, at least in the esteem of his fellow men.

When they parted Henry asked: "Are you coming east?" and Coster said vehemently:

"No! There's nothing to bring any man east of the Rockies. I've tried it, and I know what I'm talking about." But he added airily: "Give my love to Mary, Henry. I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to send her a box of candy, sometime."

"She'll be very much pleased," Henry said politely.

He was, while they were together, a little overpowered by Coster, but after he left the other man this impression passed. Henry was older than he had been before; he was able now to perceive that Coster was, after all, an old and faintly pitiful emptiness.

"I know men like that," he thought, "on Beacon Hill. People let them talk because there's no way to stop them. But I don't expect Harry amounts to as much as he thinks he does, after all."

2

It was perhaps as well for Henry's peace of mind that he had during these months this great interest in his new work, for the winter that was just gone had been hard on young

Dan. The boy had suddenly taken it into his head to grow taller. He was lengthening out in an alarming fashion, and this process seemed to be accompanied by a degree of emaciation, just as when a rubber band is stretched it grows smaller in the middle. Also, his cough was somewhat worse, and when eventually they again consulted the doctor, they were advised that Dan ought to sleep out of doors, at least in the summer time.

Neither Henry nor Shirley dared ask the question the answer to which they so greatly feared; but after they had come home and when they were alone so that Dan would not be alarmed, Shirley lost herself for a moment in a passion of terror, and Henry had to reassure her.

"Now Shirley, if he'd meant that, he'd have said it," he insisted. "If he'd meant anything of the kind, he'd have said so. It's only that Dan is growing fast, and his weight's not keeping up with his height; and the doctor wants us to be careful."

He was able, by and by, to quiet the fury of her fears; and they discussed ways and means. If Dan were to sleep out of doors, that meant a tent or some other arrangement, and Shirley said:

"I wish we could have a sleeping porch. But Mr. King put in electric lights for us last winter. I don't feel like asking him to do anything more for a while."

"Dan can sleep in a tent this summer," Henry reminded her. "We can put it out in the side yard and put a cot there."

Shirley nodded. "I suppose that's the best we can do, for now," she agreed. "And perhaps next fall we can go to Mr. King, or we might even afford to build a sleeping porch ourselves." She hesitated, and her voice abruptly shook again. "We've got to do something, Henry! We've got to do what the doctor says."

"I'll get a tent right away," Henry promised.

But in the end he did not do so. Matters shaped themselves in another fashion. Clem Prior, Shirley's father, who had resumed his business career as a gesture of reproach toward Henry, had somewhat to his own surprise come to enjoy it. In the effort to sell insurance he perambulated the neighborhood, calling at every door; and although in most places he met refusal, as his canvass was extended he began to make some small success. Clem's aspect was that of a mild and benignant and lovable old man, and this renewed contact with people was good for him. His appearance was appealing, his

manner confirmed this impression, and he began to make friends. Among others, he had come to be on definitely friendly terms with Mr. King, their landlord. This was so much the case that about this time Mr. King began transferring all his fire insurance into Clem's hands.

The two men were of the same generation. Clem was at this time sixty-two years old, while Mr. King was perhaps ten years older; but they were alike in that they looked back upon the world as a thing behind them rather than as something of which they were parts. The two liked to sit and talk together, probing back into the years. Henry and Shirley knew in a general way of this developing intimacy, but they were surprised when, while the matter of a tent for Dan was still in abeyance, Clem announced to them that Mr. King, if they were willing, intended to make some slight improvement in the house.

There was behind the kitchen a sort of store room, used as a dumping ground for this thing and for that, and above it another room reached by a stair in the store room itself.

"I told him," said Clem, "that I was kind of crowded here, sleeping in the room with Dan the way I do most of the time; and he says he can fix up the rooms back there and put a stove down below that'll heat right up through. Then I'll have a kind of a sitting room, and a bed room, if you can get along without having to put things out there."

Henry seized upon this suggestion eagerly. There were times when the fact that he and Shirley could be alone only in their own bed room irritated him to the point of explosion. Elsewhere, Clem and Mary were always about, attentive and often critical observers of what went forward; but if Clem had a sitting room of his own to which he could retire, this load would be reduced to a point where it would be no longer irksome. So he said quickly:

"Fine! I think that's great, don't you, Shirley?"

Shirley hesitated. "I'd rather have him build a sleeping porch for Dan," she reminded Henry, and Clem, jealous of his new independence, cried:

"Sleeping porch for Dan? What does Dan want a sleeping porch for?"

"The doctor says he's got to sleep out of doors," she explained. "With that cough, and him so thin."

"You don't have to have a sleeping porch for that," Clem protested.

"Well, he could sleep in a tent in the summer time," Shir-

ley agreed. "But he couldn't sleep out in a tent when there's snow on the ground."

Clem was not willing to lose that which he had gained, and he sought an expedient. "I don't know why, now," he argued. "You can put a board floor in, and it'll be dry; and put plenty of covers on him."

"A floor like that, and a tent would cost a lot," Shirley replied.

"Well, he can sleep with his windows open," Clem urged. "You don't have to have a sleeping porch to sleep out of doors. He can have his windows open and stick the head of his bed right against one of the windows." He banged his hand on the table. "Wait a minute! I know what you can do. You know that room off the kitchen that Mary uses for a sitting room. It sticks out from the side of the house, with a kind of a flat roof on it. You can fix a sort of a sleeping porch up there on the roof over that room."

"If Mr. King's going to do anything to the house, I wish he'd do that," Shirley agreed.

"That wouldn't cost much of anything," Clem told them. "It would mean putting a floor—that's maybe ten dollars—and then you could slant some two by fours out from the side of the house and put some kind of roofing paper, or canvas, or tin on them, and he could sleep out there."

"You'd have to have a door," Henry suggested practically.

"Go out through the window from the bedroom," Clem retorted. He got to his feet. "I'm going over and talk to Mr. King about it right now. That won't cost much of anything, and I'll bet he'll do it, too."

He hesitated, turning back to them, bargaining: "But you've got to let him fix me up out back of the kitchen if I do."

And he added, a little boastfully, with that pathetic desire of old people to compel younger folk to appreciate their importance in the scheme of things:

"He'll do it for me. I don't suppose he'd do it for you, but he'll do it if I ask him to."

In the end this was done. The arrangement was not wholly convenient, since Dan, in order to reach the sleeping porch, had to go from his room through the hall and the bath room and through the back bed room, which Cynt and Mary occupied; but none of them resented the inconvenience. Dan enjoyed sleeping out of doors so much, and spoke about it so often that Cynthia, before the summer was over, insisted on

joining him there; and their two cots stood side by side outside the window of the bedroom.

Shirley suggested that she and Mary might exchange rooms. "Then I can be near Dan, at night," she explained, "in case he needs me. And your sleep won't be disturbed."

But Mary said jealously: "I guess I can take care of Dan if he needs any taking care of; and you need your sleep, Shirley."

As time went on Dan did need taking care of. He was apt to have an occasional severe coughing spell at night, and Mary used to get out of bed and get his cough syrup from the bathroom and force her fat and uncontrolled figure through the cramped window to take it out to him. Shirley said to Henry one night that it was too bad Mary had to do this.

"She's too old to have her sleep disturbed," she said. "It's really my part, Henry."

"Mary likes it," he assured her. "It's been good for her. Don't you notice the change in her since she's had someone to look out for? She was getting old when she had nothing to do but sew for you and Cynt, and help with the cooking and the dishes. Mary's never happy, Shirley, unless she's got someone to tend. You know that, well as I do."

"I think she has been happier," Shirley suggested, "since she knew Harry Coster was doing so well."

"I think so too," Henry assented.

"Of course, she probably wasn't ever really in love with him," Shirley confessed. "Not feeling the way she did about George Nye. But she can't bear to have anyone helpless or in trouble, and she speaks to me about him sometimes; always has. About what a pity it is that he shouldn't get along better. I think she's rather proud of him, Henry—to think he's in politics and so successful and all."

"I know what you mean," Henry agreed.

"If he were to come back," Shirley guessed, "she'd be as excited as a girl."

Henry laughed explosively. "Well, thank the Lord he's not likely to come back!" he said. "Mary's too old for romance now."

3

Harry Coster did not come back. They never heard from him, never had word of him again. But early in September

another came back who had been gone. Henry came home at dinner time and when Shirley met him she excitedly demanded:

"Henry! Who do you think is here?"

"Who?" Henry asked.

"Thad Gore," she said. "He came over about an hour ago, and you wouldn't know him! He's a grown man, and he's so changed!"

"Where is he now?" Henry asked.

"He's up talking to Dan," Shirley exlained. "I made Dan go to bed early, because he was tired. They're up in Dan's room, and Cynt is there, and she's just sitting on the edge of her chair listening to Thad tell stories about the sea." She added, with a little laugh, "I listened to him for a while myself, until I had to get supper. He's had the most interesting times."

"Did his ship come in here?" Henry asked.

She shook her head. "No. No, he's left the sea. He's going to college, Henry."

"Good Lord!" Henry ejaculated.

"That's the most remarkable thing about it," Shirley told him. "It's as though he'd grown up, blossomed out somehow, just in these few months. How long is it, Henry?"

"I don't know," Henry said. "Two or three years, isn't it?"

"Something started him reading and studying," Shirley explained. "On one of their voyages there was a doctor, whose health had broken down, taking a sea trip to get over it, and he talked to Thad. You know Thad always was bright as long as he stayed in school. Dan used to tell us that. And now Thad's come back, and he's going to take college entrance examinations right away."

"I'll go up and see him," Henry decided; and he went upstairs while Shirley returned to the kitchen.

In Dan's room he found Thad, become now a tall, broad-shouldered young man, who gripped his hand in a way that made Henry wince, and who gave Henry a pleasant deference, immensely gratifying. Thad called him "sir"; and during the days that followed, Dan was to adopt this fashion of addressing his father, with the flattering imitation of childhood.

Thad, Henry found, was humble enough in explaining his plans.

"I thought I'd take the college examinations, if I could," he told Henry, in answer to a question. "Yes sir, that's right."

"Where are you going?" Henry asked, and Dan said eagerly:

"Thad, go to Dartmouth. I'm going there just as soon as I'm ready. It's great up there, and they've got a wonderful football team."

"Have you ever been there?" Thad asked.

Dan said: "No, but I know fellows who went there. It's right up in the woods; just a little town and there's a river, and they go snowshoeing and skiing in the winter, and everything. And you can work your way through there, Thad. A lot of the fellows do."

"You planning to work your way through, Thad?" Henry asked.

"Well, I've saved up about six hundred dollars," Thad confessed. "I thought that would start me, anyway; and by that time I can see what it looks like and what I'll have to do." He added, with a rueful smile: "I've been over talking to pop, too. I guess I didn't treat him so well, running away and everything. But he says he can let me have a little if I need it. I thought some I'd go to Harvard."

"Don't go there," young Dan protested. "It costs a lot more there, and if you work, you don't have any friends. And they've got a rotten football team."

"Where is Dartmouth?" Thad asked.

"It's in Hanover," Dan explained. "Hanover, New Hampshire. It's about a hundred and fifty miles. . . ."

Henry said: "A lot of good men have come from Dartmouth, Thad. Your father probably knows Mr. Powers over in Newton. He's been in Congress. He had a lot to do with Taft's campaign here in this state last spring. I know him. I'll take you over to talk to him if you want."

Thad shook his head. "That's mighty good of you," he agreed. "But I guess I don't need to bother him. He can't help me pass the examinations, and that's what I'm worrying about more than anything. I've been working by myself mostly, but I wrote to the principal of the high school here, and he told me what I'd have to have, to be ready for college, and I've tried to cover the ground. I guess the best thing for me to do is to go to the college people themselves and find out, isn't it?"

"You go up to Hanover and talk to them and see," Dan insisted. "I'll bet after you've been there, you won't want to go anywhere else."

Thad laughed a little uncomfortably, and said: "Well, I don't know."

Henry, as it happened, looked just then toward his daugh-

ter. Cynt was sitting on the foot of Dan's bed, silent and attentive, her fingers twisting in her lap. She was, Henry had to remind himself, only twelve years old; yet this was at the moment hard to believe. She was so still, and there was in her countenance and in her eyes as she watched Thad and listened to him such a deep and worshipful attention.

"What do you think, Cynt?" he asked, in a jocular tone, wishing to startle her out of her abstraction; but she only looked at him with a slow turn of her head and said soberly:

"I guess Thad will do the best thing, papa. I guess Thad will know what to do."

Thad and Dan laughed at that, and Dan said irrelevantly: "That's always the way with you, Cynt. Anything Thad does or says."

"Well, I think so," Cynthia confessed, and Henry, vaguely alarmed, said abruptly:

"Well Cynt, I guess you and I better go downstairs and help your mother get the supper on. Thad, you'll have to come to supper sometime. I suppose you want to be at home tonight."

"I guess so," Thad agreed. "Yes, I'll have to be getting on." And he rose and turned to grip Dan's hand. "Hustle up and shake that cough, old horse," he said. "We've got to get together again."

"You bet you," Dan agreed.

Cynthia had left the room, but when Henry and Thad came downstairs together, she was waiting to give Thad his hat at the foot of the stairs.

Thad said: "Goodnight, Mr. Beeker," and Henry shook hands with him, a little doubtful of the result, wincing in spite of himself. "Goodnight, Cynt," said Thad, and Cynthia said gravely.

"Good night, Thad!"

Thad laughed, and flushed, and looked at Henry; and Henry felt himself somewhat in the way; but Thad only said hurriedly: "Well, goodnight, everybody," and went out the door.

Henry shut the door behind him with a feeling that they had escaped some vague catastrophe, escaped it at least for the time.

Later, Thad wrote from Hanover that he had passed his examinations; and he entered Dartmouth that fall.

X

Henry was to be sorry in later years that at this time in her life he had so little contact with his daughter. Cynthia, who had as a little girl been a good deal of a tomboy, was becoming more and more quiet and self-effacing, so that she rarely intruded herself upon his consciousness. She had her own concerns. She and Helen Kirconnel and the two Heywood girls were forever together in varying combinations, their relations shifting this way and that from week to week; and when Henry came home at night she was apt to be either at the home of one of the other girls or with one of them in her own room upstairs. Shirley told him one day that Cynthia had lately resumed her former interest in her dolls, and in an exaggerated degree; and she reminded Henry that Cynthia was growing up.

"She's thirteen, you know," she told him. "And she's put on, all of a sudden, so many womanly little ways."

Henry smiled; but he was no particularly attentive; for there were graver matters to occupy his mind. Dan was rather worse than better. It was necessary for him to spend now and then a day, and sometimes a week, in bed to recuperate the strength wasted in some unaccustomed activity. He was still growing taller, and this year, although he was only fifteen years old, he outstripped his father and was able to look down on Henry. Henry found in this a certain satisfaction. It had always been one of his hopes that Dan would not be a small man like himself, and he and Shirley agreed that Dan was going to be like her grandfather, who had been a tall and stalwart figure. But just now, though Dan grew tall, he was by no means stalwart.

Weakness clothed him like a garment. The doctor warned them that his heart had been overstrained by his rapid growth, and that he must live quietly and easily for a year or two; and although they were assured Dan's lungs were untouched by disease, his cough persisted sickeningly.

They bore this long dread in their hearts, and upon each

one of them was laid the heavy burden of enduring not only their fears for Dan, but of supporting the other. Henry learned to come home with a boisterous shout of welcome ready on his lips. He learned to affect a rollicking cheerfulness and a confidence he did not feel. And Shirley, on her part, would go for weeks and months with a bright and confident demeanor and a gentle smile in her eyes, until Henry began to persuade himself that she was no longer worrying; and then abruptly, when her sleep had been disturbed or work had piled up upon her, she would fall with no least warning into a passion of weeping, until her tears brought surcease and she could dry her eyes and smile and go bravely on again. Once or twice she confessed to him that she did not feel particularly well. There were shadows under her eyes, which had not used to be there, and she had sometimes twinges of disturbing pain.

Henry had to learn to hold in check his old habit of confiding everything to Shirley. He had to spare her what concern he could, and in this state of affairs he began to turn once more to his sister, as he had used to do in his distresses, and Mary, with the philosophy which life had taught her, was able to reassure him. There was nothing particularly convincing in what she said. She had no reasons nor arguments. She simply told Henry over and over that everything would be all right; that all he had to do was to go bravely on, taking each day as it came. She insisted that Dan was simply growing too fast, and that when he was a little older he would put on weight and regain his strength again; and she said Henry should not worry about Shirley's pains.

"Women always have aches and pains," she told him. "I've had them all my days."

Henry tried in a groping and ineffectual fashion to devise ways in which Shirley might be diverted. He urged her to have new clothes, and he took to reading the fashion notes in the *Tribune* so that when he came home he could discuss with her and with Mary what her new dress or her new hat should be like. The wide-brimmed straws, which had for a season been in fashion, were passing. It was no longer true that a stylish hat would cover a barrel. The peach basket, Henry insisted for the sake of provoking Shirley to argument, was by no means so becoming to her as those wide straws had been, and he was gratified when she said at this, her cheeks flushing with indignation:

"But Henry, I'd look ridiculous in a hat like that now!"

He argued with her for the sake of provoking her to argument; and he joined Mary and Shirley in conferences over the draperies of skirts, which were fuller that year, and expressed absurd opinions for the sake of rousing Shirley to combat them.

There were so many things amiss at home that Henry could not take his work and his plans to Shirley as he liked to do. Nor his worries either. He had to bring a confident countenance to her; and he was very grateful, during this long illness of his son, for the fact that the Campions and the Kirconnels and their other neighbors sought ways of kindness. In Helen Kirconnel, Dan's illness seemed to arouse the latent mother instinct, and she used to come, when he was forced to lie abed, and talk to him or read aloud to him for hours on end.

She was tall for her age; a fair, still child with a grave womanliness about her. Shirley, watching her and Dan together, sometimes had dreams.

Dan, they were told, required to some extent a special diet, expensive quantities of milk and eggs; and the doctor came to see him often, and sent, as often, bills. This was the first year since his marriage that Henry saved no money at all.

2

With these anxieties at home, Henry found anodyne in his work, and he threw himself with increasing zeal into the routine involved in his tasks at the State House. His interest in political news was so complete and so inclusive that he scarce read the other columns of the Boston papers at all. The murder of Clarence Glover, which was to occupy the headlines for months to come, no more than caught his eye. He was more interested in the fact that Draper would be the next governor; that Curtis Guild was to retire. When he came to town in the morning, Henry seldom stopped at the office at all, but went directly to the State House. He did not always even go downtown to get his pay, but had it brought up to him by an office boy or by young Morgan Lewis, who had been assigned to work with Henry on the Hill when there were extra tasks to do.

Thus he was not in touch with office news, and it was a tremendous surprise to him when, a week or so after the Glover murder, David Pell came into the press room in the State House. Henry was there at the time, talking with

Worthen of the *Times*. The other men were about the building on one errand or another, and when Pell appeared in the doorway, Worthen, who was facing that way, looked up and waited for David to speak. Worthen was a new man on this assignment, had not known Pell heretofore; but Henry followed his glance and saw David standing there and leaped to his feet and crossed and gripped the other by the hand. He introduced David and Worthen, and later, as the other men came back, they had to some extent a reunion; and they asked Pell how matters were in Washington and how he was and what had brought him here; and he asked after their families and after the men who had been here in his time. . . .

Henry took no great part in this conversation. He was watching David and listening to him and becoming more and more conscious of a curious sense of disappointment. Pell had been tall and slight, with a quiet way of talking and a steady eye. Henry thought him now a little fat. His cheeks were somewhat puffed, and they lacked color; and Henry marked that he smoked cigarettes constantly. Pell had not smoked in the old days at all.

When by and by Henry had Pell a little more to himself, he fell diffidently into talk with the other man.

"How long are you here for, Dave?" he asked, and Pell said:

"Only a day or two. I came back to look after some business. Some family stuff. One of my uncles died."

"Is Mrs. Pell with you?"

"No, she couldn't get away," Dave explained. "She had a lot of engagements that she didn't think she could break. I told her she ought to come over and see my old stamping ground, but she couldn't see it that way. I'm sorry, too. I'd like to have you know her. She's a wonder!"

"She must be," Henry agreed. And after a moment he asked: "How are the books going, Dave?"

"Fine," Pell assured him. "Selling great guns! I've got another one coming out next spring."

"What's it about?" Henry asked.

"Oh, sort of a triangle story," Pell explained. "Only it's two women and a man. The usual stuff. But I think I've got a new slant on it. And that's the sort of thing people are reading now, more and more.'

"A love story? Henry asked "I thought you used to say that there wasn't any such thing as a great love story."

"Oh, I've learned a lot about the game since then," Pell assured him laughingly. "I was kind of a nut as a kid, I guess. You remember that first book I wrote, about the life here in Boston, back ten or fifteen years ago? Say, that life is just as completely gone as if it were four hundred years ago, isn't it? The whole country is changed since then. Streets full of automobiles now, and people moving faster. And the subways, and everybody's got a telephone, and the theatres are running every night. You remember the way women used to dress—those big sleeves?"

"I'd almost forgotten," Henry confessed. "Sure, I remember. Things change so quietly you don't notice them much, unless you're watching. I still have a copy of that book, Dave. I think I'll read it again some day. I thought it was pretty good."

"What are you writing now?" Pell asked.

"Well, I haven't had a chance to get at anything else," Henry confessed. "I've been pretty busy. Say, Dave, can you come out to dinner?"

"Sure, I'd like to," Pell assured him. "Yes, I want to. I want to see your home."

"Shirley'll want to ask you a lot of questions about Mrs. Pell," Henry said with a smile. "She's more interested in that sort of thing than anyone I ever saw. She'll want to know how you met and everything."

"I'd like to go," Dave agreed; and while they waited until Henry could safely leave for home, they talked, sometimes alone together and sometimes with the others who came and went, their talk drifting from this matter to that. Henry said once:

"I expected you to resign the Washington job before now, Dave."

"If I'd known you were in line for it, I would," Pell told him, and Henry shook his head.

"I'm not in line for that," he said gravely. "I've made a lot of acquaintances up here, and I can handle this all right, and I think I can accomplish something once in a while. A lot of the men here will listen to me, and they like me. I haven't any idea of going to Washington, Dave. This is the kind of work I've been wanting to do and I'm going to stick to it."

Pell looked at him almost wistfully. "You always were a great hand to have ideals, and all that," he commented. "You haven't changed any, have you?"

"Why no," said Henry, flushing a little. "No, it seems to me I've always been headed for just such a place as this, and I like it, Dave. And this is a job I can swing."

"If they ever try to send you to Washington," said Pell thoughtfully, "don't go, Henry."

Henry hesitated. "I know what you mean," he agreed. "You used to tell me that this bunch up on the Hill were pretty small men. And they are. But you know, it's kind of funny, the way it looks to me. Most of them really take themselves seriously, Dave. A lot of them are trying to do a good job, when you get right down to it. Of course, they like to get up here, and at first that's all they work for. But there's something about being even in the House that makes men take themselves a little more seriously."

He laughed shortly. "There was one fellow down in the House last year named Marbury. He was nothing but a wind bag. He used to get up whenever there was a debate about anything and shout off a lot of rot about the corrupt rich and the Back Bay aristocrats and so on; but you know, I happened to be with him one day when a delegation came over from his district, trying to get him to vote no on a bill they were fighting. He turned them down cold, Dave. He said it was a good bill and he was going to vote for it. And I had always thought of him as a sort of a demagogue. If he's got that sort of a streak in him, maybe the others have, if you look in the right place."

He paused, and Pell clapped him on the shoulder. "Go it, young man!" he said sardonically. "You talk like an evangelist!"

Henry laughed uncomfortably. "Well, I'm just telling you the way it strikes me, that's all. Come on; I guess we can start for home now."

When they set out down the hill, Henry asked: "Have you stopped at the office? You want to go by there?" and Pell shook his head.

"No, I went in this afternoon," he explained. "Rather depressing, seemed to me."

"We've got a pretty good plant there now," Henry pointed out. "I think the paper has come ahead some, since Peacock took full charge, after Mr. Drayton died. You know we've got a wireless plant. Get stuff right through the air."

"That's rather different from the way it was when I started in," Pell remarked. "We used to bring our copy to the office in a hack!"

"Don't you think it's a pretty good looking city room?" Henry suggested proudly, but when Pell did not reply, he added: "I suppose you have an office of your own in Washington."

Pell nodded. "Yes. Yes, have to have." He added a moment later: "I saw old Pat Dryden in the reference department. What's he doing in there?"

"He's been in there now for quite a while," Henry explained. "I thought it was kind of pitiful at first, because of course Pat's had a pretty fine career. But I guess he's satisfied. He must be getting pretty old now. He looks to be seventy anyway."

"No, he's not," Pell retorted. "No, Pat isn't over sixty-five."

"He looks like an old man," Henry insisted.

"I saw Marty Bull up in the corridor," Pell remarked. "What's he doing up there—some special stuff?"

"He's on the *Standard* now," Henry explained. "Marty never stays very long in one place. I think that's why the *Tribune* didn't send him up to the State House when they sent me."

"How long have you been there?" Pell asked, and Henry said:

"Two years or so. I went up when Bob Proctor got sick."

"Where is Bob?" Pell inquired, and Henry said ruefully:

"Why he died last year! In a sanitarium. He had a kind of nervous breakdown. Bob was always pretty high strung, you know; and he took things hard."

They boarded the train for Newton Centre, and at Pell's suggestion went into the smoking car. Henry was a little uncomfortable in that thick and clotted atmosphere. It was warm and he took off his hat and wiped his forehead, and Pell said with a smile:

"Henry, you're getting a little bald!"

"Hair's getting thin on the temples," Henry agreed.

"It's thin in the middle, too," Pell told him. "Don't fool yourself!" He surveyed the other more attentively. "Getting fat, too, I think! Henry, you're beginning to look middle aged!"

"Well, I suppose we do change more or less," Henry agreed. "It's quite a while since we saw each other, Dave. I don't think I've heard from you—how long is it? I think the last letter I had from you was the one about. . . ." He laughed. "About that novel of mine!"

" 'I Speak of Africa,' " Pell agreed, remembering. And he chuckled. "What did you ever do with it, Henry?"

"I never did much of anything, I guess," Henry confessed. "Not after what you said. At first I thought I'd work it over again and try to make something out of it." He smiled. "But I could see so darned plainly that you were right, and it would have meant rewriting the whole proposition, and it's hard to find time."

"Have you read it lately?" Pell inquired, with a smile, and Henry shook his head.

"No. No, it's put away around the house somewhere."

"You read it some day," Pell suggested. "I think you'll be amused, Henry!"

"I suppose so," Henry agreed. "I guess I was an awful fool to bother with it at all." He added: "I've kind of lost interest in novels lately, anyway. I don't get time to read much; and when I do, I read slowly, and if you read slowly, it takes too long to read a novel and you don't get anything out of it when you're done."

"I know," Pell agreed, almost regretfully. "I used to do a lot of reading, but things pile up so it's hard to find time. Of course I'm busy all day, and at night we go out quite a lot. Mrs. Pell knows everybody in Washington."

"I expect she's mighty nice," Henry suggested, and Pell agreed.

"Yes, she is! Yes, she's fine! She has a lot of fun with me."

"Why?" Henry asked.

"Oh, she thinks I'm pretty sober and conservative," Pell explained.

"Have you any children?" Henry inquired doubtfully, and Pell shook his head.

"No, we haven't," he confessed. "You know the way it is when you're living in an apartment. We mean to have, by and by. How's your family?"

"Why we're all fine," Henry explained. "I telephoned Shirley you were coming, and she's tickled to death. You won't know Dan. He's taller than I am now, and thin as a string. And Shirley's father lives with us; and Mary, my sister. You remember her."

"Yes, I remember her," David agreed, and he was silent for a moment, and Henry had an uncomfortable feeling that Dave was sorry he had agreed to come to dinner. But this

passed when they alighted from the train to walk the half mile or so to Henry's home.

During dinner and afterward through the evening Henry took no great part in the conversation. Shirley had many questions to ask and David answered them; and she led Pell to talk about Washington. He gave them a picture compounded out of hints and details dropped here and there which was in the end sufficiently complete and comprehensive. He said goodnight to them about half past nine, and said he would catch the nine fifty train for town. Henry and Shirley walked with him to the station, against his insistent objections, assuring him that they wanted the exercise; but when they came back together after he was gone, Shirley saw that Henry was thoughtful, with a curious rueful sorrow in his countenance; and though she knew why he was thus sorrowful she could not bear his silence. So she asked at last gently:

"Henry, why are you so still? What's made you unhappy?"

Henry smiled. "Funny, but I was thinking about Sam Russell," he confessed.

"Why?" she asked.

"Well," said Henry. "Sam's about the oldest friend I've got, I suppose. I haven't seen him for a good many years. Last time I saw him I thought he'd degenerated, and I thought it was probably because he'd gone to live in the country and just stood still.

"And I suppose, next to Sam, I've always counted on Dave as the best friend I have in the world." He hesitated, laughed again. "Yet he didn't go to live in the country, Shirley!"

Shirley said after a moment: "I know I should hate his wife!"

"So many newspapermen are like that," Henry remarked, half to himself. "They get cynical. They think everything's wrong. They lose their driving force, somehow, Shirley." And he added with a certain vehemence: "I'm not going to be like that! By gorry, Shirley, don't ever let me get to feeling the way he does about things, will you?"

Shirley made no answer, but she clung more tightly to his arm.

XI

The effect of Pell's visit was to spur Henry during the next year or so into an increasing devotion to his work. He became for a while absorbed in it to the exclusion even of his worries at home, and when he left the house in the morning, he was able, before he turned the first corner, to cast his thoughts ahead to the waiting day. He had never worked so diligently before, never thrown himself so completely into his tasks. His success on the Hill, he realized, must be based upon acquaintance, and he made it a business to cultivate every individual with whom he came in contact. If this meant staying in town in the evening, he did so, and there were times when for a month on end he was seldom home before nine or ten o'clock.

He found the office was disposed to allow him a reasonable expense account for entertaining, and he fell into the habit of taking this man or that to dinner in the evening, to a moving picture show, or to the theatre.

Shirley, for the most part, understood, and avoided any protest; but when once or twice her own weariness and worry and the increasing discomfort which she suffered provoked her to remonstrate with him, he was accustomed to point out the necessity of what he did.

"I think I'm taking my job seriously for the first time, Shirley," he told her. "And I know you want me to. I'm not going to be one of these men who work eight hours and then stop. The way to succeed is to work sixteen hours a day, and that's what I'm trying to do."

She was in her more normal moments rather proud of his diligence, and she encouraged his enthusiasm. His work had become not so much a means to an end as an end in itself, and each day was an achievement. To a man in this frame of mind, time is a fleeting thing; and for Henry, thus absorbed in his profession, the months slipped away.

In the fall of the year when Foss was elected governor, there was a change in the management of the *Tribune*. Mr.

Peacock lost the confidence of the trustees who managed the paper, and a man named Warden was put in his place. Warden assumed the responsibilities not only of publisher, but of editor, too; and he took upon his shoulders not alone the dictation of the editorial policy of the paper, but also to some extent the management of the news end. The effect was to reduce the importance of Ben Harris; and Ben, who had heretofore completely controlled the work of gathering news and of displaying it, found himself reduced to going to Warden for instructions and permissions.

Ten years before—perhaps even five years before—Harris would have rebelled. He was a bachelor, a free man; but he was by this time well in his fifties, and whatever his secret reaction may have been, outwardly he gave Warden every deference and coöperation.

Warden, immediately upon assuming control, made one or two changes in make-up. He instituted the publication of a pictorial section, printed on glazed paper and with the effect of color, which was included in the Sunday paper. He broadened the financial features of the *Tribune*; and in his preliminary scrutiny of all departments, early in the new year he sent for Henry.

Henry came home the night after that interview elated and triumphant.

"I hadn't met him before," he told Shirley. "Of course I'd seen him in the office, but he never paid any attention to me, and I didn't bother him. I'd seen him up on the Hill in the past. He had a lot of public interests, and he used to write editorials for the *Times*. He's an editor, in the real sense of the word, Shirley; and I've been kind of wondering whether he would make any change in the State House. I knew I was doing good work, but I didn't know whether he'd realize it."

He had already told her the burden of his news. Warden, after some talk, had given Henry a word or two of praise and had raised his salary to forty-five dollars a week. For the past two years doctor's bills and the like had curtailed or wiped out Henry's annual savings, and he found this increase like a draught of new wine. It had been the first word he cried to Shirley when he came to the house, and she rejoiced with him.

"But it isn't so much the money," he said now, "as it is that it means Mr. Warden thinks I've done a good job up there. You see," he continued, "he's planning to make the *Tribune* more of a power politically than it has been in the past.

There's going to be a senatorial election pretty soon, and he told me confidentially that Murray Crane won't run again. He said there'd be a fight over his place, and we're going to be in the fight. I've put in a lot of time, Shirley, making friends up there, and that's why I'm valuable to them." He added ruefully, "I know it's been hard on you, my being away so much."

"Not really hard," she protested. "Only when I've been tired it's bothered me. But now that Dan's better I don't worry as much, and I know you have to be away, to accomplish all you are accomplishing."

"Of course," he agreed. "I knew you really understood. But it's been tough, just the same, and tough on me too. And it will have to be the same way this year, Shirley, I'm afraid. But I don't mind the work as long as you understand."

"I do understand," she assured him. "And I'm tremendously proud of you!"

Henry laughed, something like intoxication in his tone. "Well, I'm rather proud myself," he confessed, blushing like a boy. "I worked mighty hard for this, Shirley, and it tickles me to know that I've got what I went after."

"And it's only a beginning," she reminded him.

"Yes," he agreed soberly. "Yes, it just means more and more responsibilities."

2

The effect of this recognition of his work and of his services was to increase Henry's diligence and enthusiasm. Warden had instituted on the editorial page of the *Tribune* a daily column of short political notes which Henry wrote, and above which his name was set and although he had occasionally had a signed story in the paper heretofore, this arrangement gave him a tremendous sense of achievement, and a feeling of responsibility not only to the paper, but to the community in which he lived.

These were months of a continual ferment, and there was a great deal for Henry to do. The election of Foss as governor, presaging as it did the national ascendency of the Democratic party, had aroused a quickened public interest in politics. There was a feeling of change in the air. Even Republicans were dissatisfied with President Taft. Roosevelt had come back from Africa, and eyes and hearts were beginning to turn toward him again as toward a rescuer who

might conceivably avert that party overthrow which began to seem possible. During the early months of this year, Roosevelt was approached again and again and asked to commit himself. Henry, who found his old adoration for that hero reviving, thought Roosevelt's return from Africa was like Napoleon's from Elba; and his pulses quickened and thrilled as though he had been a member of that other old guard which could die but could never surrender.

When in June Roosevelt at last announced, in reply to insistent interviewers, that he would endorse Taft for a new term, Henry felt a sickening and drooping sense of disappointment. But his zeal for politics did not slacken. He sometimes discussed with Shirley the increasing interest in woman suffrage, and he felt, and told her, that as a matter of duty she should interest herself in public affairs. He reflected the sentiment of those among whom his work lay when he predicted that suffrage was sure to come and that she must therefore be ready to exercise her privileges. But Shirley refused to be moved by this. She had, she said, enough to do at home, to look out for Dan, who this fall began to show a more and more definite improvement in health. Also Cynthia had started in at high school, and this widening of her horizon had brought her new contacts and new problems which Shirley must help her meet.

The *Tribune* that year, under Warden's management, had shown a decided gain in circulation, and Warden—a solidly built, bullet-headed man, whose short cut hair bristled forward over his forehead—was full of plans for the future. He made it a point to talk frequently with Henry; and Henry began to perceive that these conversations were designed to inspire him and to awaken him to a livelier effort. But they were repeated until they began insensibly to fail of their effect, and Henry acquired toward them the sophisticated attitude with which the newspaper man is apt to view the world at large.

The tremendous textile strike that year in Lawrence had its political aspects; and at Warden's suggestion Henry kept in close touch with its developments. There was almost daily news from the governor's office, from the time the troops were sent into Lawrence late in January. But when in February Colonel Roosevelt announced that his hat was in the ring, Henry forgot everything else in the enthusiasm which this candidacy aroused in him. Warden and the *Tribune* were for the organization, and Henry served them loyally, as was

his duty; but when Warden one day asked him his own feelings, Henry confessed his partiality for the colonel. Warden flushed a little and said gravely:

"I hope you won't let it interfere with your work, Beeker. You know we shall fight him."

"Oh, I understand, Mr. Warden," Henry replied. "I appreciate the fact that the *Tribune* will be on the organization side. But as long as I'm not writing editorials I don't suppose it matters greatly, does it?"

"It may make a good deal of difference," Warden reminded him, "if you should use your influence at the State House."

"I don't think I have much of any influence up there," Henry protested, deprecatingly.

"If you haven't," Warden said drily, "we want a man who has; and if you have, we feel it should be used for our ends."

There was no particular threat in his tones, and Henry said readily:

"Why, I'll be very glad to do anything I can, of course. I suppose I'll vote for Colonel Roosevelt if he's a candidate. And of course as far as we can tell now he may be nominated by the party!"

"He will not be nominated," Warden replied.

"Don't you think the voters want him?" Henry persisted. "Don't you think they're kind of sore on President Taft?"

"I believe the organization would rather be beaten in November than take Roosevelt now," said Warden. "In fact I'm perfectly sure of that. But it is, of course, a matter which need not be openly discussed."

So Henry learned to hold his tongue, to keep his own counsel, to say what was expected of him, and to think what he chose. But this very inhibition had the effect of increasing his devotion to Roosevelt; and even the tremendous fact of the sinking of the *Titanic* in April was obliterated from his mind when Roosevelt came to speak at the Arena a fortnight later. Henry covered that meeting for the *Tribune*, and when he got back to the office and sat down at his typewriter he had to wait and control his own emotions before he could begin writing his account of the affair. When two months later, in Chicago, Warden's prediction was fulfilled and Roosevelt, denied the nomination, bolted, Henry's blood ran like wine through his veins and he felt within himself the soul of the crusader.

But Warden sent for him to remind him, more seriously

his time, that the *Tribune* would fight Roosevelt tooth and nail; and Henry—for Dan's doctor's bills were still heavy—said soberly:

"Well, of course sir, I was a Roosevelt man before the convention. But I didn't expect him to bolt if Taft was nominated."

He was miserably ashamed of his own cowardice, but he had nevertheless a sense of security and of safety when Warden said approvingly:

"Exactly! I think that's the point of view for Roosevelt men to take. I'm glad you are so sensible about it, Beeker."

When Wilson was elected and President Taft suffered so overwhelming a defeat, Henry felt a bitter satisfaction; and although he kept his tongue between his lips away from home, he made no attempt to conceal his triumph from Shirley.

"If they had nominated Roosevelt, we'd have won easily," he said. "They were willing to take a chance for the sake of beating him, and they've had their way. As far as I'm concerned, I'm tickled to death."

She knew Warden's position in the matter, and she said now: "I should think Mr. Warden'd see, Henry, that you were right all the time. I should think he'd be sorry now."

"Oh, I don't argue with Warden," Henry replied. "I can't afford to argue with my bread and butter, Shirley. As long as I'm working for the *Tribune,* I've got to do what I'm told to do." He added, grinning: "But I can think what I choose!"

She said ruefully: "I wish you could say what you choose, too."

"Well," he reminded her, "that's one of the troubles with being a newspaper man. You've got to believe what the boss believes!"

3

These stirring events had perforce distracted Henry from the contacts with Shirley and the children which he might have wished to have. He was very busy, so that when he came home at night he was tired, and there were many evenings when he did not get home at all. Cynthia, he realized one day, was growing up. This was her second year in high school. Her skirts were lower, and now and then she put up her hair; and when Henry chaffed her about this, Shirley warned him quietly not to laugh at Cynthia.

"She's at the sensitive age," she reminded him. "It's awfully serious to her."

"She looks so darned funny!" Henry protested.

"I think it's sweet," Shirley replied. "And even if it is funny, Henry, you've got to get used to it. She'll be a young woman now in a year or two."

Thus warned, Henry studied Cynthia somewhat more attentively; and he discovered to his surprise that Shirley was right. There was a curious maturity in Cynthia's bearing. She was like a child playing at being grown up, but the play became more convincing all the time. Henry found himself in his daughter's presence curiously awkward and ill at ease, and he realized that they had not many things in common; that her youth had slipped away from him, that his opportunities were going. In a few years, he told himself, she would be marrying; and his heart sickened at the thought, and he began to seek out ways to come close to her.

But even more than Cynthia, Dan absorbed his attention when he was at home; for Dan's health, which had taken a turn for the better about a year before, had mended steadily, and the boy had stuck to his determination to enter college in the fall of this year of Wilson's election. During his long illness he had lost much time at school, but with a dogged perseverance he had spent his long days in bed with a book propped upon his knees. His eyes suffered. He had begun to wear glasses the year before.

"But I've kept up with my work," he told Henry. "I'm ready to take the examinations when the time comes."

Henry had at first been doubtful. "I don't know but what you ought to wait a year, Dan," he had suggested. "Take a year to get good and strong again. You've grown pretty fast. You're four or five inches taller than I am now, and you're beginning to fill out."

"I'm all right," Dan insisted. "I feel fine."

"I'll see what the doctor says," Henry at last conceded.

But reassured in that quarter, Henry began to catch some of Dan's own enthusiasm. He had, when he could, some talk with this son of his, and he discovered to his surprise and to his increasing delight that Dan was no longer a boy; that already he was becoming in many respects mature. Dan, he found, could think as accurately as himself; could sometimes even best Henry in an argument.

"He's read a lot more than I have," he told Shirley. "You know, he can read French, too. He's taught himself that. He

says he can't pronounce it, but he can read it. He's learned that from the dictionary, with nothing else to go on except a French grammar. And he's read a lot of history, and he's read that volume of Blackstone Thad Gore sent him. Read it through. I tried to read that, and it's just like a lot of dust to me. Makes me want to sneeze, or go to sleep or something. Shirley, he's going to be quite a boy before he gets through!"

And Shirley laughed faintly. "Are you just finding that out, Henry?" she asked.

"Well, I never really realized it," Henry confessed, "until lately."

It occurred to him one day—he was giving more and more thought nowadays to his responsibility toward Dan—that there were some things he ought to tell this son of his, if Dan were to venture into the world; and one Sunday afternoon, when Shirley and Mary and Cynthia had gone down to the lake shore to sit in the cool shade there, Henry diffidently broached the subject. Dan heard him patiently enough, politely enough, and with none of that embarrassment which Henry himself felt, and once in a pause Dan said gravely "Yes, I know"; and again, "Yes, I understand"; until Henry was provoked to ask:

"How do you know, Dan?"

Dan flushed faintly. "Why papa," he said, "I've talked a lot to Thad, when he's been home. Thad's a mighty decent fellow, papa, and he's always studying, and particularly things like that. He's going to be a surgeon, you know."

"He is?" Henry inquired, faintly surprised.

"Yes," said Dan. "Yes, he's taking first year medical at Dartmouth this year. He gets a B. S. degree in June, and then he'll have two more years in medical school up there. That's why I'm so anxious to start there this fall. We're going to room together."

"Thad's been instructing you, has he? Educating you?" Henry asked. He who had set out to inform his son found himself now the questioner instead.

"Yes," Dan replied. "Yes; you see Thad prepared himself for college and he's always taken extra work up there; and he's written me right along about what he was doing and sent me some of his books and things. I guess I've really done as much work as the freshmen do up there. I'll have it pretty easy the first year, Thad says."

Henry said thoughtfully: "I don't suppose we ever realize that our children are growing up. I've been pretty busy the

last two or three years, Dan. Haven't had as much time with you as I wanted to have."

"Oh, that's all right," Dan said gravely. "I know you work awfully hard to take care of us."

"I want to be as good a friend of yours as Thad Gore is," Henry told his son, trying to keep his tone light, but with a break in his voice for all of that; and Dan said assuringly:

"Gosh, I guess you don't need to worry about that, papa."

"Well," said Henry, "I wish you would remember that I've spent over forty years in this world, and I've picked up a few odds and ends of information; and if there's anything you want to know any time. . . ." He smiled faintly. ". . . . That even Thad can't tell you, I'd be glad to have you come to me."

"I surely will," Dan promised.

"I don't think you need any particular warning," Henry said. "I think you're a pretty clean-minded young man, Dan."

"I've known nice girls," Dan confessed. "Helen's been awfully sweet to me, and it's been wonderful for me to have a girl like that for a friend."

"Helen's a fine girl," Henry agreed.

"Cynt's fine, too," Dan told him. "She's a quiet little thing most of the time, but she's awfully nice and she's got more sense than you'd think."

"She thinks pretty well of Thad, too, doesn't she?" Henry asked quizzically, and Dan laughed.

"Gosh, she's crazy about him," he agreed. "She wanted to run away and marry him when she was nine years old! He gave her an awful talking to."

Henry chuckled. "Did he show her the error of her ways?" he asked.

Dan grinned. "Well, he made her shut up, anyway," he replied. "But I don't think he changed her mind much. She's awfully stubborn sometimes."

Henry had from this and other talks with Dan a new respect for this son of his, a respect that amounted to something like deference. And in the matter of Dan's plans for college, Henry, after consultation with Shirley, decided to let the boy do what he wished to do.

Henry had at this time some thirty-three hundred dollars in the savings banks. Dan, when they discussed ways and means, assured his father that five hundred dollars a year would pay all his college expenses. And "I'll be able to work

esides," he added. "And save some of that and help you out little, sir."

"I don't want you working," Henry protested. "As long as can swing it. You'll need all your strength for your studies, Dan."

Dan grinned. "I guess there's no danger of my working myelf sick," he assured his father. "You leave that to me."

Henry, after one of these more and more frequent talks vith his son, told Shirley a little regretfully: "You know Thad Gore has had a lot more to do with bringing up these chilren of ours than I have, Shirley."

"No, he hasn't," she protested. "You don't realize it, but ust having you in the house day after day has meant more nan you can ever know to them. They've got one thing rom you, Henry—inherited it, or learned it from you. They've got your ideals, your way of having an ambition and vorking to make it come true. And that's about all any faher can give his children."

"It's too late now, anyway," Henry confessed. "About all ve can do now is to let Dan go ahead as he wants to, help im where we can."

"I only hope he's strong enough," Shirley said doubtfully.

"I'm not worried about Dan any longer," Henry assured er. "I'm a good deal more worried about you."

"Oh, I'm all right," said Shirley. "I've been fine now for a ong time."

"See that you keep so," he told her good humoredly.

So Dan took his examinations as he wished to do and assed with marks conspicuously good; and he entered Dartnouth as he so long had planned.

XII

wo or three days after the November elections, Ben Hars called Henry at the State House one day and asked him to ome down to the office. "The boss wants to talk to you, Hank," he explained. "Lewis can look out for it up there this fternoon, can't he?"

"I guess he can," Henry agreed. "I'll be right down after lunch. Is that all right?"

"About two o'clock," Ben agreed.

There is something about such a summons as this which is calculated to make any wage earner, no matter how clear his conscience may be, faintly uneasy; and Henry was as susceptible to this feeling as any man. He could not help remembering that Warden had resented his friendship for Roosevelt, and it seemed to him possible, now that Roosevelt's candidacy had brought the Republican party down in ruins, that Warden might take some small revenge on Henry. Morgan Lewis had been helping him with the State House work for some years, and Henry liked the younger man. He spoke to him now, before going out for luncheon.

"I won't be back this afternoon," he said. "Or not for a while, anyway. I've got to go down and see the boss."

"All right," Lewis agreed. "There's nothing particular coming up, as far as I know."

"I may not be back at all," Henry added, grinning at his own jest. "I expect Warden's hide is smoking, right now, with the licking the Old Guard took. Maybe he wants to take it out on me."

He expected Lewis to laugh with him, and reassuringly; but the younger man, to Henry's faint dismay, took the remark seriously.

"Oh, I guess you don't need to worry," he said in a comforting tone. "I guess he knows the *Tribune* couldn't get along without you up here."

Henry shook his head. "I've seen a lot of good newspaper men come and go," he replied. "And I never saw one yet that left much of a hole." He added a word or two of specific suggestion as to the afternoon's possibilities, and then went down the Hill, stopping on his way to the office for a bite of lunch for which he had no appetite.

But he was, within a few minutes of reaching Warden's office, immensely relieved. The publisher was busy at the moment of Henry's arrival, and Henry had to wait until Warden had dictated four or five letters; but when his stenographer was gone Warden swung around in his swivel chair and looked at Henry, and Henry saw that the other man was in a good humor.

"Well Beeker!" Warden said jovially. "There's quite a lot of wreckage lying around, isn't there?"

Henry smiled. "Yes sir," he agreed. "Yes, there's going to

be a lot of debris shovelled up before the G.O.P. is itself again."

"That's why I sent for you," Warden explained. "We want to start in right away with the shovelling." He hesitated for a moment and Henry waited without speaking. "We've still got the legislature," Warden said then. "And that means we'll elect a senator in January. That's the next thing, Beeker."

There seemed nothing in particular for Henry to say, so he said nothing; and Warden tilted back in his chair, bringing his clenched fists together lightly in front of him.

"There'll be one hundred and sixty-four Republicans in the Senate and House combined, won't there?" he asked, and Henry nodded.

"Yes sir," he agreed.

"I want you to leave the State House work to young Lewis for a while and go out and see the new men, and the old ones," Warden said. "I don't mean the Democrats. We may pick up some votes from them when it comes to the election, but this thing is going to be settled in a caucus, Beeker. How many of the hundred and sixty-four do you suppose you know?"

"Quite a lot of them," Henry replied. "I haven't checked it up yet, but a good many of them are re-elected."

"Well," said Warden. "I want you to take your hat in your hand and go out and see them. See every one of them."

"Who are we for?" Henry asked. "Weeks?"

"Naturally," Warden assured him. "You'll hear some talk that the organization is divided between Weeks and Draper; but as a matter of fact Draper is just a scarecrow. When the time comes, all the strength we've got is going to be thrown to Weeks. I don't mean that you have to see all these men personally; but what we want to find out first is just where we stand. How many of them you can get to commit themselves. How many of them are committed, and where they're going to be when the first vote is cast. McCall's the man we're afraid of."

"He's a pretty good man," Henry commented. He had always liked McCall.

"Yes, he is," Warden agreed. "But so is Weeks. And we're going to do some intensive work for him, between now and the first of January. One of the first steps is to find out just how much work we've got to do."

He hesitated, and then added: "Oh, and there's one thing you want to talk about if you have any talk with these men.

The Republicans will want to unite on some candidate before the balloting begins in joint session. There are going to be a number of candidates. Probably none of them will have a majority. So we want to stir up sentiment in favor of a two-thirds rule. That'll make it easier for us to hold the fight open, and do what work is necessary to swing votes."

"I think that's a good plan," Henry agreed. "That is to say, I think it's a good thing that the caucuses should have a two-thirds rule. It would be a mistake to go into the joint session and be divided there, and maybe give them a chance to put someone across."

Warden nodded. "All right," he said. "That's your job. There won't be much going on, up on the Hill, until the first of January, anyway, and we'll let Lewis handle the routine there. You're on a roving commission, Beeker, for the next six weeks. Now go to it! And you'd better report to me regularly."

Henry reported first that night to Shirley. He was very much pleased with the task he had been given to do. "It's the sort of thing I've always wanted to have a part in," he told her. "It's the sort of work a newspaper ought to be doing, Shirley. Moulding opinions. Throwing influence on the right side in elections, doing what they can for the causes they believe to be just."

"Are you for Mr. Weeks?" Shirley asked. "He lives out here. It would be nice to have a senator from our home town."

"Why, as a matter of fact," Henry confessed, "I suppose if I were voting, I'd vote for McCall. He's a pretty good man. He's done a lot of good work, and he's progressive. But I don't have to vote. That's up to the members of the legislature; and while I like Mr. McCall, I suppose that doesn't matter particularly. As far as I know, Mr. Weeks is a fine man, too. He's a vote-getter, certainly."

Shirley said doubtfully: "It will mean your being away from home a good deal, won't it?"

"For a while," he agreed. "I'll start in around here, and I can do a lot of it by correspondence. But I'll have to go out of town now and then, even if it's only for a day." He added, looking at her doubtfully: "You don't mind, do you?"

"Of course not," she assured him. "It's your work, Henry. I never want to interfere with your work in any way."

He thought suddenly that Shirley was not looking so well

of late, and a swift solicitude lay hold on him. "How you feeling lately?" he inquired.

"Fine," she assured him.

"Having any more of those pains?"

"Not a pain," she said, and laughed a little.

"If you were, you'd tell me, wouldn't you?" he insisted, and she said:

"Don't be absurd, Henry. Of course I would. I tell you everything."

He chuckled. "I used to believe that," he confessed. "But I know better now, Hon. I've had my eye on you for quite a while. You don't tell me anything that you think is going to worry me."

"Don't be ridiculous," she protested.

"It's all right," he assured her. "I appreciate it!"

"Besides," she said. "So many of the things I worry about never happen. So why should I bother you with them?"

"So I can worry with you," he told her gently, and she said:

"But I don't want you to worry. For instance, you mustn't worry about me. I'm perfectly all right. It is probably just that I was a little sorry you were going to have to be away. I always miss you when you're away. You know we haven't been apart very many nights since we were married."

"Not many," he agreed. "And I hope we never are. I get a lot out of talking things over with you at night, the way we do. I wonder if other married people do the same way."

"I expect so," she agreed. And she added, reminiscently: "Sometimes, years ago, when we were first married, you used to get on my nerves frightfully, Henry, going to bed at night. You were so slow about it! But I've gotten to the point where I love that just as much as I do the rest of you. I don't think I've been really irritated with you for years and years now."

"Gorry," he agreed. "I must have been a tough one sometimes."

"Oh, you were a devil!" she assented, for she saw that he was a little proud to think he had been irritating, a little proud to be told how much improved he was.

"I guess it was maybe because I was tired," he told her. "Or upset about something, when I used to snarl at you."

"I always understood," she assured him. "But when I was tired, too, I was apt to snarl back."

"I never heard you snarl in your life," Henry told her

fondly, and kissed her and left her and went into the other room to bed.

He plunged next day into the work Mr. Warden had put into his hands. Henry's acquaintance was wide and his friends were many; but he very quickly discovered that it was difficult to persuade a man to commit himself. It was useless to write letters. The replies, if there were replies at all, were uniformly evasive and noncommittal, so that after ten days or two weeks Henry began to be much abroad, up and down the state, spending long hours in seeking out and talking with the newly elected senators and representatives. The very difficulty of the task increased his interest in it. His only regret was that it kept him occasionally away from home over night, so that, for example, he missed seeing much of Dan when the boy came home for his first Christmas vacation.

Dan had acquired, even in this short time in Hanover, a new maturity and poise, curiously like that womanliness which Cynthia had begun to put on as though it were a consciously worn garment. It was as though Dan and Cynthia felt upon themselves the responsibility of growing up, and were preparing to assume the estate that awaited them. The day after Dan went back to college, Henry spoke of this to Shirley and she nodded happily.

"Yes, I noticed it, too," she agreed. "He feels like a man grown, doesn't he?"

"I was sorry not to see more of him," Henry said regretfully. "Not to have a chance to talk with him. He seems to be getting along very well, seems to be happy there."

"Oh, yes," she agreed.

"I'm sorry he can't do anything in athletics," Henry said regretfully. "I think Dan would like to be on the football team the way Thad was."

"He's going to be on the freshman debating team, he thinks," she told him, and Henry exclaimed with pleasure: "Is that so?"

"He's not sure yet, but he's hoping to be," she explained. "They have a debate with the sophomore team. He's very much interested in his English work, Henry," she added, and then hesitated on the point of saying something more, and he observed this hesitation.

"What did you start to say?" he asked.

"Nothing," she replied.

"Yes, you did."

"Well, I was going to say," said Shirley, "that he asked while he was at home where the manuscript of your novel was, and I got it out for him and let him read it."

Henry flushed with pleasure. "You did?" he echoed.

"Yes, he read it all the way through," she replied.

"What did he say about it?" Henry asked.

"Well, he seemed awfully interested," she told him.

"What did he say?" Henry insisted, and she hesitated and then confessed:

"He didn't say anything, Henry."

But when she saw the sudden hurt in his eyes, she added quickly: "You know Dan isn't a boy that talks a great deal about things. I'm sure he liked it."

Henry laughed. "Not if he had any sense, he didn't," he declared. "That's pretty poor stuff, Shirley. I can see it now. I was pretty young when I wrote that—young mentally, I mean."

"You must write a political novel some day," she suggested. "Out of your experiences in the State House."

"I'm too busy," Henry told her. "I tell you, it keeps a man busy handling the job I've got now."

And she agreed fondly: "I'm sure it does."

A day or two before the first of the year, Henry was able to report to Warden that he had definite statements of their position from some sixty or seventy of the Republican members of the incoming legislature. They were about evenly divided between McCall and Weeks.

"But most of them won't commit themselves, sir," Henry explained. "It's safe to say they will go the way they're told to go. You know a lot of men in the legislature just wait to see which way the cat is going to jump. They're only up there to take orders, and for the sake of having an 'Honorable' in front of their names."

Warden nodded. "That agrees with our information from other sources," he commented. "How about the two-thirds rule? Do you think we can put that over?"

"I think so," Henry agreed. "I think everybody feels sure that the party'll unite on some candidate before the election begins."

"That's the main thing," Warden said with satisfaction. "If we can do that, we'll manage the rest of it in the end."

2

Sometime during the night before the first vote was to be taken in the Republican caucus, Henry was wakened by a sound from Shirley's room; and he listened for a moment and heard what he thought was a murmur of pain. He was out of bed in an instant, and at her side; and in the dark room, without switching on the lights, he said in a whisper:

"Shirley, are you awake?"

"Yes, Henry," she confessed, and by her tone he knew she had been wide awake for long. It had none of the drowsy mumbling note of one just roused from sleep.

"I thought I heard you groan," Henry told her.

"No! No!" she assured him. "No, I didn't make a sound." But something in her voice distressed him, so that he snapped on the lights and looked at her, and he saw that she was drawn and pale.

"What's the matter, Honey?" he demanded, his heart sore with dread. "Are you sick?"

"I think I've got a little indigestion," she confessed.

"Tummy ache?" he asked, trying to jest.

"Yes, a little," she agreed. "It's just a cramp! It's better already. I'm sorry I woke you up."

"That's all right," he said. "I'll get you a hot water bottle."

"Oh, don't bother," she protested.

"Of course I will," he insisted. "Or would you like some soda or a drink of hot water or something?"

"Now Henry," she urged. "I don't need anything. You go on back to bed. You need your sleep, and I'll be all right."

"I'm not sleepy," he assured her.

"Well you will be tomorrow," she said. "And you're going to have an awfully busy day. Go back to bed, Henry. If I need anything, I'll call Mary."

"You don't think I can go to sleep when you're suffering, do you?" he said, irritated as he was apt to be by any distress in Shirley which he could not relieve. "I'll get you a hot water bottle."

He went into the bath room, and the sound of the running water there aroused Mary. She opened the door which led through the little back hall into the room she and Cynthia occupied, and she stood there blinking a little in the sudden light; and Henry thought abstractedly that Mary was growing old. Her hair was now as much gray as it was brown, and

her eyes without the thick glasses behind which they were accustomed to hide were curiously bulging and naked and almost shameful. The skin of her cheeks had sagged a little, and she was fatter, seen thus in her nightgown and wrapper, than in the more rigorous garments of day. She asked:

"What's the matter, Henry?" and he said lightly:

"I'm just filling a hot water bottle for Shirley. She's got indigestion or something."

Mary hesitated; and then she said: "Henry, I think she ought to have a doctor."

He looked at her in quick surprise. "Why?" he protested. "It's just a stomach ache, isn't it?"

"She's been waked up a good many times lately," Mary told her, "while you were away. And she's had a lot of pain during the day. She won't let me call a doctor, but I think you ought to."

He took the hot water bottle and went back into Shirley's room, and Mary followed him, and he said to Shirley, in a boisterous tone:

"What's this Mary tells me, Shirley? Have you been keeping something from me?"

He saw the quick glance Shirley shot at his sister before she replied. "Why no, Henry," she said. "Mary, what have you been saying?"

"You know you ought to have a doctor," Mary insisted stubbornly. "I've said so all along."

"That settles that," Henry said with good humored vehemence. "If you're going to fool the old man, we'll get someone here you can't fool."

Shirley protested: "Please, Henry! I'll be all right in the morning."

"I'm going to find out about that," he retorted. "It's out of your hands now, young lady. You're going to do what you're told."

And he went downstairs to telephone.

An hour later, Shirley was on her way to the hospital. Henry rode with her in the ambulance, and his tone was cheerful and reassuring, but the hand he gave her and to which she clung was icy cold. At the hospital, he had what seemed to him interminable hours of waiting, sitting with other worried folk in an outer room while doctors came and went. They went in to see Shirley, came out to talk together in whispers, a little apart from him. A little after dayight, he was allowed to see Shirley, and she assured him that she felt

better now; that the doctors could find nothing wrong with her.

"I feel perfectly absurd," she said, "having you make such a fuss over me. There's nothing the matter with me, Henry. They just laugh, after they've looked at me!"

"Sure!" he agreed. "I guess all you need is a little rest, and eating some food you haven't cooked yourself for a few days. Your cooking's enough to make anyone sick!"

She smiled gently. "You've grown fat on it, my dear!" she told him.

"Well I get at least one good meal in town every day," he retorted. "And even if it were good cooking, where you have to stand over the stove all the time you naturally don't get any good out of it yourself. No sir, young lady. You're going to stay here, live on the fat of the land for a while, see how it feels."

"But Henry," she protested. "It's frightfully expensive, and with Dan in college we can't afford it."

"Well, if necessary, Dan will come out of college," Henry told her resentfully. "Besides, I'm not such a pauper as all that. I guess I can afford to put my wife to bed for a week if I want to, without going to the loan sharks. You put that out of your mind, Shirley, and behave yourself and do what you're told."

She turned her head on the pillow and closed her eyes for a moment, and by and by, without opening them, she asked softly: "Did the doctors tell you anything, Henry?"

"They said they want to keep you here for a little while, and see how you get along with some rest," he explained. "I guess that's all that's the matter with you."

"I'm not tired," she insisted.

"You're like most women," he replied. "You never know when you're tired until you break down. A man's got sense enough, or he's lazy enough, to rest when he needs to rest. But you women go on until you drop. I hope this will be a lesson to you."

She begged wistfully: "Don't lecture me, Henry," and he cried in a swift compassion:

"Lord, Honey, I'm just joking, trying to make you smile!"

So she smiled.

He had to leave her by and by, for there was always his work to be done; and though on any routine day he might have been spared, today it seemed to him out of the question to ask for relief. So he went to town. Twice or thrice during

the day he telephoned the hospital: but there was, they assured him, no new word at all. Shirley was resting comfortably.

Yet she was ever and of necessity uppermost in his mind.

When the first ballot showed McCall leading Weeks by seven votes, Henry tried to spur himself to a proper interest in the proceedings and to the activities which were expected of him. He had said nothing to anyone about Shirley's illness, not even to young Lewis. Nor did he; and the next day he still held his peace. But when that day it became apparent that no immediate decision was likely, he ventured to leave the State House for an hour or two, while he hurried out to the hospital and back again.

For they had operated on Shirley that morning.

He was not able to see her. The miserable business of coming out from under ether had left her weak and shaken and barely conscious. But a businesslike young doctor told Henry the operation had been successful; and a brisk young nurse, with a little more capacity for understanding his state of mind, patted him on the shoulder and said cheerfully:

"There now, Mr. Beeker, you're not to worry! I want to be able to tell Mrs. Beeker that you're cheerful. You just put her right out of your mind, and come out at supper time tonight and you can see her."

"Is it hurting her?" Henry asked.

The nurse laughed at him. "Bless you! She doesn't know whether it's hurting her or not! She's half asleep right now."

Henry with this had to be content. He went back to town again in a dull stupor of sorrow and concern.

He saw Shirley for a minute that night and was shocked to see how still she lay, and how curiously slight and pale she seemed, and to feel when she sought to press his fingers how weak her grasp was become. He sat beside her bed, talking to her in a low tone of cheery commonplaces, speaking in reassuring wise. But by and by the nurse beckoned to him from the doorway, and he said to Shirley:

"Well, we're pretty busy. I've got to go back in town tonight, my dear. You won't mind if I run along?"

She pressed his hand again, and he saw tears creep out from beneath her lashes and stand in little pools upon her closed eyes. So that he might not burst into tears himself, he rose and made some haste away.

Next day—they had had by that time nearly twenty ballots—the State House was the scene of a very delirium of activ-

ity; men hurrying to and fro, much whispering, a cloud of arguments and recriminations, bickerings and accusations. Henry did not see Shirley at all. When he went to the hospital, the doctors confessed to him that she was not as well as they had hoped she would be.

"She has gas pains," he was told. "They'll pass off, we hope, in a few hours. But for the present she is very uncomfortable."

He felt a sudden fury at them, at their ability to speak in such matter of fact and unimpressive words of the agony of her who was all his heart; but he bridled his tongue.

"After all," he thought on his way back to town, "if they got all worked up when one of their patients was sick, they couldn't do their work properly, I suppose. They've got to be that way."

But the next day Shirley was desperately ill. Henry heard words without understanding them. There was, he gathered, some mechanical incident which had ensued as a result of the operation and which had disorganized and which might disrupt the mechanism of Shirley's very life. He heard for the first time of adhesions, and of stoppages, and could get no satisfaction. When he asked: "Is she awfully sick?" even the nurse who had befriended him could only reply:

"She's resting more comfortably now"; or, "She was uncomfortable last night."

And when in desperation he demanded of the doctor: "Do you think she's going to die?" the physician said evasively: "We're doing everything we can!"

His own ignorance of matters surgical shrouded him in a cloud of mystery which made his terror more devastating; and he could find in none of them a willingness to dispel this cloud. If he could only understand, he thought he could endure his terrors more easily. If he could be told just what it was which now threatened Shirley, he thought his own strength and love might perhaps find a way to remove the threat. But all about him, among their kindred minds attuned to the mysteries of the profession which they served, he met a wall of tolerance, gently patient with his ignorance, inflexibly determined not to relieve it. And there was so much for him to do on Beacon Hill.

This necessary work of his might have been merciful, might—if such a thing had been possible—have distracted him, have enabled him to forget for a little while all his concerns; but he loved Shirley too dearly, and whether he were

listening to the talk of other men, or answering Warden's persistent questions and indignant protests, or seeking to persuade or to convince some unwilling representative, ever his thoughts were full of Shirley. Questions ran maddeningly through his mind: "Is she worse?" or "Is she better?" Or even, "Is she living? Is she dead?"

One night he sat from midnight till dawn in the waiting room of the hospital; and they confessed to him at daylight that they had feared she would not live so long as this. "If she has another attack, I don't know what we can do," the surgeon said.

And: "Isn't there anything you can do?" Henry demanded.

"Nothing but operate again, to relieve the condition. And that is dangerous. We're afraid she couldn't bear it."

"Do it!" Henry cried. "Do it! Don't stand by and let her die without doing what you can."

"You'll have to leave that to our judgment," the doctor insisted, and Henry retorted:

"I don't trust your judgment! Your judgment's put her where she is. If there's anything you can think of to do, do it! And if there isn't, get someone who can think of something. I don't want her left this way any longer."

The surgeon said reluctantly: "Well, Mr. Beeker, we may feel justified in taking extreme measures. I'm glad you are willing for us to do so."

Henry hesitated; and he swallowed desperately. "If you decide to do anything," he said at last in a more humble tone, "telephone me, will you, at the State House? The press room. Here, I'll give you the number."

So they telephoned him at noon that day that they would operate again. He held his voice steady and asked: "Shall I come out? Can I get there to see her?"

"She isn't conscious just now," the nurse replied. "But we'll let you know as soon after the operation as possible."

"But if she's not going to live through it, I've got to see her," Henry protested.

"Oh she'll be all right, Mr. Beeker," the nurse assured him. "You can see her later this afternoon."

Then Lewis caught his arm and said: "Say, Hank. Warden wants to see you. Down in the Ways and Means committee room."

So Henry hung up the receiver and hurried away to meet his chief.

The business on the Hill, Warden told him, had taken a turn. The tide had swung their way. That day or the next the end would come. And I want you, said Warden, to do so, and so, and so.

Henry nodded. "They're operating on Mrs. Beeker," he explained reluctantly. "I'd like to get away and see her, later in the afternoon, if I can."

Warden hesitated. "Well, of course," he agreed, in a grudging tone. "I suppose if that's the case, you'll have to go. We'll try to manage here, if we can, during the next twenty-four hours."

Henry moved like a man hypnotized. He was by this time inured against emotion, and while his thoughts functioned with an almost unnatural clarity, he felt nothing at all. They had not let him see Shirley after all. But next day the balloting ended, and the caucus at last agreed. When he had finished reporting the final vote to the *Tribune*, and while he was still at the telephone, Henry called the hospital. Shirley, he was told, was conscious and had taken a turn for the better.

"I think she's going to be all right," the nurse assured him. "And if you want to, you can come out this afternoon."

There were still many small businesses demanding Henry's attention here; but at this all sense of his obligations left him. He rushed from the room and found young Lewis.

"Lew!" he cried. "I'm leaving for the day. Sorry to dump everything on you, but I've got to see Mrs. Beeker."

"Go ahead!" Lewis told him heartily. "Everything is slick as pie here now."

And Henry hurried away.

An hour later, very gently so that he might not hurt her, he was holding a weak but happy Shirley in his arms. The embrace was no more than a gesture. She lay in her bed, and the nurse had warned Henry not to hurt her. It was not so much that he held her, as that he bent above her broodingly, his arms along her arms, his body fondly pressing hers. But she had strength returning now, and once her hand rose and her fingers touched his hair.

When he got home later that afternoon, Mary met him at the door, and at what she saw in his face she said no word, but extended her capacious arms. It was a long time since Henry had wept on Mary's bosom, but he found it full of a strange sweet comfort now. And Mary, holding him thus,

had a still peace in her eyes. She was always happy when those she loved had need of her.

3

There was one aftermath of the senatorial contest on Beacon Hill, an encounter with Mr. Warden in which Henry, not without peril to his own fortunes, bore himself valiantly. Among the members of the House and Senate there were some six or eight who had consistently opposed the *Tribune*'s candidate in caucus; and when the fight was done, word came to Henry through Ben Harris that he was to make it his business in his stories thereafter to discredit these men in every possible way.

Five of them had been friends to Henry in the past, and by the same token they had been valuable to causes which the *Tribune* had espoused. That the paper now, for the sake of this one issue, should surrender to ingratitude, seemed to Henry a shameful thing; and he protested to Ben Harris. But Ben said drily:

"Well Hank, it's orders from the big boss. There's nothing you can do about it."

"I don't think he understands the situation," Henry said.

"I've told him all there is to tell," Harris replied. "He's made up his mind. They're on the black list as far as we're concerned."

Henry hesitated for a moment. "By gorry!" he decided. "I'd like to talk to him."

"What's the sense of that?" Harris asked. "It won't do them any good." And he added warningly: "Or you either."

Henry flushed with slow anger. "I don't think Mr. Warden understands," he repeated. "I don't think he wants to be unjust to these men. I'm coming down this afternoon and see if I can talk to him."

"Don't be a darned fool!" Harris advised. "All you've got to do is do as you're told, Hank."

"There's more to it than that, it seems to me," Henry insisted. "I don't think you understand Mr. Warden, Ben. He's a mighty decent fellow, and he'll appreciate my point of view, anyway, even if it doesn't do any good."

"You're an optimist!" Harris said drily, and Henry laughed.

"Well, you're a pessimist, Ben," he retorted. "You don't mind if I talk to him, do you?"

"Go ahead," Harris agreed. "I'll give you a good recommendation when you start hunting another job!"

"Shucks!" Henry replied. "I guess I don't need to worry about that." And he added, with a slow indignation in his tone, "If I do, it's a good time to find it out. But I know you're wrong."

Harris made no further protest; but Henry had as a result of what Ben said some continuing fears. As a consequence, he held his peace for the time; but when a day or two later the *Tribune* printed a cartoon pillorying one of the men in question, Henry went down to the office and sought out Mr. Warden and put the case before him. He spoke respectfully and reasonably.

"I appreciate the fact," he agreed, "that they made a lot of trouble for us in this last business. But they've been pretty good friends of ours, Mr. Warden; and I'll tell you, sir, it's going to hurt our influence up there if we do this. Members of the House and Senate are going to say to themselves: 'Well, you can go along with the *Tribune* for ten years, and as long as you do what they say, you're all right; but just as soon as you do something they don't like, you're on the black list. So what good does it do you?' "

Warden said thoughtfully: "A man must be judged by his entire record, Beeker; not by only a part of it."

"Well, it isn't that so much I'm thinking of," Henry insisted, "as it is the influence of the *Tribune* up there. If you try to boss people all the time, they're going to resent it. But five of these men are pretty good fellows, and they're on the right side of most questions; and if they disagree with you now and then, why they're honest about it. They're not crooks, sir."

Warden asked drily: "Are you working in their interests or in ours, Beeker?"

"I guess you know I'm working in yours," Henry replied, and his cheeks flushed again as they were apt to do when he was a little angry. "I guess you don't need to ask me that, sir."

Warden hesitated and shoved papers around on his desk irresolutely for a moment, then leaned back in his chair. "All right, Beeker," he agreed. "I'll consider what you say."

"I hope you'll understand my point of view," Henry said doubtfully, a little fearful, now that the thing was done.

"I shall try to do so," Warden promised him, and turned his back.

So Henry took himself away.

XIII

Shirley mended rapidly; so rapidly that her improvement had almost the aspect of a miracle. And as her strength flowed back, so did Henry's, too. He had not fully understood the terrific strain under which he had been laboring until the ordeal was over, and he could surrender to his own weariness and distress; and he had two or three days in which he moved like a man in a dream, scarce conscious at all of his surroundings. But Shirley's swift recovery was like a powerful stimulant. One of its results had been to spur his courage to the point of that interview with Mr. Warden, and that too had its part in filling Henry with a sense of exhilaration and of power.

That he should have opposed Mr. Warden's wishes and commanded at the same time the respect of his employer was a matter of some gratification to Henry; for he felt sure Warden had respected his stand and respected the manner in which he presented his case.

"He may not agree with me, of course," he said to Shirley. He had told her about the interview, as he told her so many things. "He may not agree with me, but at least he'll have to respect me for standing up for the things I think are right. And he knows I really have the interests of the paper at heart."

"Do you like Mr. Warden?" Shirley asked doubtfully.

"I can't seem to get under his skin," Henry confessed. "Of course, he's a mighty able man, and he has so many contacts with big men all over the state. He's right in the middle of things—political things. Has a voice in the councils of the party, and so on. I suppose it's natural that he and I shouldn't have a great many things in common. But I like him. Yes, and I respect him, too. And I think he's made a success of the *Tribune*. He's kept the interest in the news columns, without being quite so sensational as Ben Harris used to be. And he's built up the paper in a business way. You can see the results. We're getting more advertising, and all that sort of thing. I

think he's really a great newspaper man. It makes me proud to know that I have his confidence, that I'm working under him. And I know he values my work, too."

"Of course he does," Shirley agreed. "Didn't you win that fight for him up at the State House?"

Henry laughed. "I didn't have very much to do with that, I guess," he confessed. "I was too darned worried about you to be good for much of anything when the time came. But of course I did the best I could."

"You may not have thought you did much," Shirley assured him. "But Mary Gallop came to see me yesterday, and she told me Will says you had a lot to do with it."

Henry smiled. "Will doesn't know much that's going on up there," he assured her. "About all Will has to do with running the state is to sit in his seat in the House and vote the way he's told to. I don't see why Mary ever married him in the beginning."

"She's getting to be a bitter old woman," Shirley agreed. "Cynt was here when she came, and Mary hardly spoke to her. It's pitiful in a way, when a woman wants children as much as she does and can't have them. She'd have been so different with a family."

" 'Member the way she was when she was a girl?" Henry asked. "Always the life of the party. 'Member how she used to tease us?"

"Yes," Shirley agreed, and smiled, and added wistfully: "Mary always was my dearest friend."

"It's a sad thing, in a way," Henry remarked; "the way your friends drift out of your life. Sam Russell and David Pell, with me. Dave was in town during this senatorial fight, for a day and a half, but I didn't even see him. Warden sent for him to do something or other. I hate to lose old friends."

"You don't lose many friends," Shirley assured him fondly. "You're the greatest person I ever saw to make people like you, Henry."

"Well of course," Henry agreed, "it's been almost a business with me, at the State House. That's where the political writer's value principally lies, in his friendships. That's the source of what influence he exercises. You know, Shirley, I don't want to be just a reporter, on Beacon Hill. I've tried to be something more than that in the job right along, and it seems to me I'm getting a better hold on things all the time. In a few years you're going to be proud of me!"

She laughed at that. "Don't be absurd," she retorted. "I'm proud of you now. I've always been proud of you."

"Never had very much to be proud of," Henry reminded her. "But you will."

"I've always been proud of just that," Shirley assured him. "Just that habit of yours of looking ahead, thinking out a goal, working toward it all the time."

"It looked for a while as though I wouldn't get anywhere," Henry confessed. "But I can see a future ahead now, Shirley." He added, with a half chuckle: "Of course, my ambitions have kept ahead of me, more or less. By the time I've caught up with them, they've ceased to be ambitions any more. I haven't got much satisfaction out of them in that way. I can remember when I used to think to be a reporter was about the finest thing in the world, and I did get a little thrill out of it when old Pat Dryden made me one. But I was a kid then, and since then things have seemed to come about more or less naturally."

"You've grown up to them," she told him.

"I suppose so," he agreed. "It's just like a baby whose head doesn't come to the table top. Probably the baby thinks it will be wonderful some day to look over the edge of the table and see the things on it; but in no time at all he can not only see the things on the table, but reach them; and after a little he isn't even interested. It's too bad, in a way, that men can't accomplish things and still get the thrill out of them that they do out of trying to accomplish them, isn't it, Shirley?"

"I don't think it's so much what you do," Shirley suggested, "as what you try to do. I don't think it's so much whether you do it, as whether you try your hardest."

"I haven't always tried my hardest," Henry confessed. "There was a while there, when I was on the copy desk, when I just kind of stood still."

"Well, that was just routine work," Shirley reminded him. "But you've always been trying to do your job when you had a job to do."

"Well," Henry agreed, a gentle satisfaction in his tones, "I suppose that's why I've stuck so long on the *Tribune*. They appreciate a thing like that, Shirley. Appreciate it in the men who are working for them."

She pressed his hand tenderly. "That's why they appreciate you," she agreed.

While she was in the hospital Henry came every night that he was free, to sit and talk with her; and as she grew stronger, his visits were extended till late in the evening Shirley said once that she was almost glad she had been sick. "It's a long time since we've had such long happy hours together, Henry," she told him, and he said gravely:

"I feel as though I'd got you back, Shirley. I feel as though I couldn't get enough of you."

"Well," she confessed, "I feel a little as though I'd come back. I thought for a while that I was going to leave you." She added soberly: "It was curious, Henry. It didn't distress me particularly. It was just a quiet sort of a peaceful acceptance of things. I thought I was going to die, and I knew you and Cynt and Dan would be unhappy for a while. But I thought it would be better by and by, and there didn't seem to be anything anyone could do about it. And I knew I'd see baby."

Henry pressed her hand; but he said impersonally: "I was talking to the doctor about dying. He said that's the way with people who are dying. They never seem worried about anything. He says there's nothing to it, to dying, I mean!"

"Doctors make me tired," Shirley retorted. "They act as though they weren't human beings at all. I guess it's different when someone they love is sick."

When the time came for her to go home, it occurred to Henry that it would be pleasant if he and Shirley could go away somewhere for a little while, for a trip together. "We've stuck pretty close to home all our lives," he reminded her. "I think I'll ask Ben if I can take my vacation now, instead of in the summer."

"I don't think we ought to do that," Shirley reminded him. "The hospital bill was tremendous, and there is the doctor to be paid. And Dan has his expenses going on just the same."

"I had a letter from him yesterday," Henry told her. "He wants to come home for a week-end and see you."

"I don't think he'd better," Shirley replied. "It would interrupt his work. He'd better wait till the spring vacation."

"That's what I wrote him," Henry said. "But we might go up and see him. I think it would do you good to get away, stay away from home until you are quite well again."

"Oh, I'm perfectly well," she assured him. "Mary does all the work, and Cynt takes such beautiful care of me. She's ever so much better than the trained nurse, and it's so won-

derful to be at home and to get my hands on things again and to know that I'm going to feel better from now on."

But Henry's idea of taking Shirley for a trip somewhere persisted, and toward the middle of February it occurred to him that they might go to Washington for the inauguration. He thought this over, and spoke of it to Shirley; and though she protested that the expense was beyond them, he did not abandon the project.

"Maybe I can get them to send me over to help cover the ceremonies," he pointed out. "There'll be a lot of Massachusetts people there, and I know most of them. That way, the paper would pay my expenses, and you could have a trip too, and we could take a day or two and see the sights there."

"I shouldn't think they could spare you while the legislature is in session," Shirley urged, but he said robustly:

"Pshaw! I've trained young Lewis until he can handle things up there as well as I can. We've got the routine working pretty smoothly now."

"I don't believe they'd let you go," Shirley insisted.

"I guess they've got to, if I ask them to," Henry told her. "I've made myself valuable to them now, Shirley. They'll be glad to show me some consideration."

"Has Mr. Warden ever said anything about your talk with him?" she asked.

He shook his head. "It didn't do any good," he confessed. "It didn't help any. But at least, he must respect me for standing up for what I thought was the right thing."

Shirley hesitated, as though about to speak, but she said no more. If she had fears, she kept them to herself; for Henry was these days like a young man again. He had of late begun to seem sometimes old and tired to her, and it was pleasant to discover his renewed boyishness, his quick appreciation of the humorous aspects of their daily life, his enthusiasm for his home, his happiness with Cynthia, the relish which he took in the long letters they sometimes had from Dan. She tried to dissuade him from this persistent idea of his that they should take a trip together, but when she saw his determination, she abandoned at last her objections; and when he said to her one morning:

"Well, I'm going to tackle Ben today about going to the inauguration," she hesitated, then replied:

"It won't do any harm, will it, to see what he says."

When Henry came home that night, she watched him

closely before she ventured to ask him what Harris had replied. "He's going to talk to Mr. Warden," Henry told her. "He said he thought they were all covered, on the inauguration; and I tried to make him see that I could get enough stuff to pay them for sending me. I don't think he was very much in favor of my going, Shirley; but he said he'd talk to Mr. Warden anyway. I guess he'll let me know tomorrow."

"What do you think Mr. Warden will say?" she asked.

"I rather think he'll let me go," Henry said. "He's a live newspaper man, and we'll want a lot of stuff about the inauguration anyway."

It was in this confident and hopeful mood that Henry departed for the office next day; and Shirley all that day had' him in her mind. She thought he would telephone if Mr. Warden's word was favorable, wished she had made him promise to do so. But no word came from Henry during the day, and although she now and then contemplated the possibility of calling him, she put it off, reluctant to resolve her fears lest she should find them true.

Henry usually came home at night on a train which reached the station at five thirty-six, and this day Shirley decided to meet him. She had been out of the house two or three times before, for short walks in the afternoon; and the day, late in February, was crisp and not too cold. The walk, she assured Mary before she left the house, would do her good.

So she was on the station platform when the train pulled in, and she looked up and down the line of cars to watch for Henry's figure. He would not be in the smoking car, she knew, so she turned her attention to the others, and after a moment singled him out from among the little files of men.

He was two cars lengths away from her when first she saw him, yet at the first sight of him her heart somehow congealed with grief and pity. In the very posture of his shoulders and the carriage of his head she seemed to discover a man stricken and bowed; and she went toward him almost running, stifling her little tender cries.

He did not see her until she was come within three or four paces; looked up then with dragged and weary eyes. And she attached herself to his arm and spoke with a gay vivacity.

"Hello darling!" she cried. "Aren't you surprised to see me? I felt so well this afternoon that I walked down to meet your train. Don't you think I'm wonderful to walk so far so

soon?" He did not reply, and she shook at him fondly. "Aren't you glad to see me, Henry?"

"Yes," he told her. "Oh yes, Shirely. Surely I am."

They ascended the steps to the level of the street and turned toward home, and she drove herself to talk brightly of what had passed during the day, of Cynt's affairs, of a letter that had come from Dan. He listened without comment, and when they had gone a block or two of the homeward way she could no longer support the strain of this unaided conversation. Yet could not for the moment ask him the question whose answer she dreaded to hear. So she waited, hoping that he would tell her; and in the end, when they were almost home, he did so.

"Well, Shirley," he said. "I guess I'm a fool all right! I guess I'm a fool and a failure!"

"Why Henry," she cried. "You're not! What makes you talk so?"

He laughed. "The funny part of it is, I thought I was making good, too," he said ruefully. "I thought I'd done a pretty good job."

"Tell me, Henry," she commanded. "Tell me what's happened."

"I asked Ben today what Mr. Warden said," Henry explained, in a dull tone. "Warden has taken me off the State House job. He's going to let young Lewis handle it up there alone. I'm going to help make up the Sunday paper from now on."

She digested this for a moment, and then cried desperately: "Why Henry, that's a promotion, isn't it? Isn't that a bigger job?"

Henry made a hopeless gesture with one hand. "I was making up the paper years ago," he reminded her. "No, it means I've started down hill."

So they came silently to their own door; for she could find no true word to comfort him, and she would not be false to him in this hour.

XIV

Henry had not of late years been much in the office, and it was strange for him to come back there, to renew old contacts and to make new ones with the men who had joined the staff while he was on the Hill. His new work made him again subordinate to Mat Barker. Mat had been shifted from the daily make-up job to that of Sunday editor a year before. Henry was perfectly aware that he had in the past failed to satisfy Barker; but though this should have made him now uneasy and fearful, it did not do so. The complete destruction of his hopes, at the moment when they seemed to him likely of fruition, had left him apathetic and resigned; so that he went about his daily tasks neither zealously nor indolently but like an automaton, doing what Barker told him mechanically, without spirit and in a perfunctory and formal way.

He thought sometimes that if Barker were not satisfied and should complain to Warden, the result might be his dismissal from the paper; and though he was able to perceive that such a result would be disastrous, he could discover nothing to be done about it. He had always worked to the limit of his powers, and if they had failed to satisfy, he could now do no more.

But he found in Barker, and somewhat to his surprise, a degree of sympathy for him. Barker had heard from Ben Harris the reasons back of Henry's removal from the State House job, and once or twice when they spoke of the matter together Barker applied profane epithets to Warden, and expressed his opinion of the other's policy in unmeasured terms. It may have been this feeling of sympathy which led him to make Henry's work as easy as possible, so that if Henry had deficiencies during his first weeks in his new position Barker covered them; and if Barker had complaints to make, he made them to Henry and not to Harris or to Warden.

The Sunday department was housed apart from the city

room, and Henry and Barker between them acted not only as make-up men but as editors, planning the features for the Sunday paper, borrowing men from the city department to carry out their assignments, handling copy, and finally attending to the details of make-up. Henry tried at first to comfort himself with the realization that he was in fact an editor now; but his illusions were shattered once for all, and this specious reasoning failed in the end to have any weight even in his own mind. He accepted the fact that he had had his chance and failed to measure up to it, and he faced the issue, not all at once but by degrees, squarely enough. When Shirley railed at Warden, Henry shook his head at her.

"If I'd been doing a good job up there," he said honestly, "he'd have kept me on just the same, in spite of what I said."

"But you were, Henry," she insisted; and he smiled at her loyalty.

"I thought I was," he corrected. "I thought I was a wonder. But I realize now that no one else ever told me so, unless they were just being kind to me out of friendliness. I wasn't up to it, Shirley, that's all." And he added: "I can see that I wasn't, when I look back at a man like Tom Pope. Tom was a good State House man, but I could never touch him. Never in the world."

He was interested, during his first weeks in the office to remark the changes in the men there. Ben Harris, Henry had seen more or less regularly, so that he was not so conscious of the fact that Ben had aged and grown patient and conservative. Fred Cook he saw on the train, or at home, for Fred and Molly still lived near them in Newton Centre. But among the other men some were changed almost beyond Henry's recognition. Jimmy Horn was no longer on the paper. He came into the office one day, however, and Henry had some talk with him. Jimmy was by this time a middle-aged man, with a heavy mustache and an oily head, and he smoked a fat cigar, chewing it to shreds in the corner of his mouth. He was, he told Henry, running a stable of boxers—five or six of them—and he claimed to be making a great deal of money.

"I realized there wasn't anything for me in the newspaper game," he said arrogantly. "Of course, if that's all you can do, you have to stick to it. But all the good men in the game get out of it. That's what's the matter with it, in this man's town."

Henry listened patiently enough, but he was not particu-

larly impressed. Jimmy did not, he thought, wear the outward aspect of a successful man.

The men in the office whom he had known best were growing old. Charlie Niblo was still there; almost sixty now, Henry realized, but still slender and fair haired, and in appearance youthful enough unless you saw the little pouches beneath his eyes, and his sagging cheeks.

Jack Point, the dramatic editor, who had occasionally given Henry a pair of tickets for some theatrical opening, had frequent contact with the Sunday department. Point, as an outcome of his connections with theatrical and musical folk, was developing into an impresario. He sometimes arranged concerts, or even concert tours, and Henry got the impression that Point, too, was doing well financially.

Peter Fly still occupied the slot at the head of the copy desk. He had resigned from the paper some years before and gone to a small New Hampshire town to run a semi-weekly journal of his own; but the venture was not a success and Peter, accustomed to the more adventurous atmosphere of a metropolitan daily, returned to his old place. He was, Henry thought, little changed. He had been bald from the time Henry first knew him, and if he was perhaps a little more bald now, the difference was not conspicuous.

There were new men in the office, a number of them; some of them old in the game, who had come here from other papers or from other cities; and others of the new generation—college men attracted to the profession by the fact that it gave an immediate living wage, where other jobs open to them were apt to pay largely in experience. One of these men—Rand Morey, a Harvard graduate—was regularly attached to the Sunday staff, and Henry liked him, as he was apt to like anyone who would permit him to do so.

Pat Dryden was still in charge of the reference department. Pat must be, Henry realized, nearly seventy; and he had become a brisk and sprightly figure, who went to and fro about the office as though on business of vast importance, and who carried always in his hand a sheaf of clippings or an envelope full of photographs, or this or that. He sometimes stopped at Henry's desk and talked for a while; and Henry was at first vaguely flattered by this attention until he perceived beneath the old man's brisk manner that secret fear which sat heavy on so many of them. It was Dryden who told him—told him jocularly and as though the jest were too good

to keep—that Warden's new secretary was an efficiency expert.

"There'll be lots of hiring and firing around here before he finds he can't run a newspaper staff on an efficiency basis," Dryden predicted, and Henry agreed.

"Yes, that's so."

"But I'll say this for him," said Dryden approvingly. "He's realized I need more help in the reference. He's given me a girl in here, who does as much work as half a dozen office boys."

"She's pretty good," Henry agreed. "I've had her get some stuff for me, and she knows where things are, all right."

"Yes, she's taken a load off my shoulders," Dryden repeated.

"What's her name?" Henry asked.

"Louise Martin," Dryden told him. "She's a college girl. Graduated from Wellesley."

"Funny she should start in here," Henry suggested, and Dryden said:

"She's a niece of Warden's. She wanted to learn the newspaper business, and he agreed to let her come in here if she'd concentrate on the business end of it and not the writing. He's wise, all right! There's nothing in it for the writer, Henry. That's the mistake I made in the beginning. But it's too late for us to do anything about it now."

He picked up a sheaf of layouts under his arm, and went briskly away toward his department again; and Henry watching him go, felt a faint amusement not unmixed with pain. Poor old Pat had been a great man in his day. He was, Henry told himself, not much more than an office boy now.

2

He spoke of Pat to Shirley that night, and to Clem. "It's pitiful to see him," he said. "I remember when I came to work on the *Tribune* he dominated the paper. It wasn't just that he was the boss. He was the driving force, too. When a story came along that struck him hard you could see the change in him. His eyes would shine, and his face would get red, and his hair seemed to rumple up of itself; and his eyeshade was always on crooked, and he'd go shouting around the office, and men caught the infection from him somehow. A man would go out and work thirty-six hours on end for Pat, and never know he was tired."

He laughed. "And Pat'd never know it either! He was as bad as any of them. He drove them, but he drove himself, too. And now he's shuffling around the office and trying to look important, and desperately afraid of being fired."

Clem nodded. "Old age is pitiful," he agreed, "when it has to be lived in fear. I take a great deal of comfort out of the little I've been able to save, Henry. It gives me a feeling of independence and self-respect such as nothing else could."

"You don't need to worry," Henry reminded him gently. He had grown very fond of Clem again in these later years. "There's always a home here for you."

"I remember Dryden," Clem said. "I went in to see him before you and Shirley were married, Henry. Went in to find out what sort of a young man you were apt to turn out to be. He gave you a pretty good reputation, son."

"Pat has always liked me," Henry agreed.

"I was very much impressed with him," Clem commented. "I'm glad to hear he's so comfortably placed now."

"I don't know," Henry said. "Of course I've been in the newspaper game long enough to know that most of the men who stick to it either die from overwork or go crazy or take to drinking or something. None of those things has happened to Pat, and I suppose he's happy enough. But I should think there might be something glorious and satisfying in just working yourself to death, dying on the battlefield, so to speak."

Clem shook his head. "As you grow older," he said, "you'll get over those notions. What old people want most of all is security. Security and a little company of their own age now and then. I've missed Mr. King pretty badly since he died last year." He hesitated, and Henry said nothing; and Clem added thoughtfully: "That's the terror in growing old, Henry. The fear of being lonely. If you have security, and company, you've got about all you can expect to have."

Henry, faintly uncomfortable, caught Shirley's eye and smiled. "Well Hon," he said, "I guess we don't need to be afraid of being lonely, with Cynt and Dan coming along, do we?" And her eyes met his happily.

Henry during these months was coming to think more and more of Dan and Cynthia and of what they were to be and to do. He had for so long been concentrated in himself, even though all he strove to do was for their sakes, so that they might be comfortable, and perhaps be proud of him, their father, too. But he had been so absorbed in his own work and in his own ambitions that he had not always had time

for them. Coming home tired, he was not so patient with them as he might have wished to be; and when either Dan or Cynthia approached him with matters which seemed to them of interest but which were in his eyes necessarily childish and inconsequential, he had been apt to adopt an abrupt and impatient tone, so that they turned away silent and rebuffed.

But now, through the change in his work in the office, his own future, it seemed to him, had been decided. He could only go on doing as well as possible the work that was given him to do and with no hope nor prospect that it would lead to anything of any great importance in the end.

"Of course," he told Shirley one night, "I'll always be busy. That's one thing about the newspaper game. If you're an experienced man and lose one job, you can always find another one somewhere. But I know now that I'll never get ahead very far."

When he spoke thus, Shirley had at first tried to argue with him; but she came to perceive that spiritual change in Henry which made him accept his new estate not in a spirit of rebellion, but in one of understanding and almost of satisfaction.

"It's something to know," he told her one night, "that there's no use struggling any more. It's something to know just what you can do, and to concentrate on doing that without trying a job that's beyond your powers. But Dan's got life ahead of him, and Cynthia too, and there needn't be anything out of their reach."

"If Dan turns out as fine a man as you," Shirley told him, "I'll be satisfied."

"He and I are developing quite a correspondence," Henry confessed with a faint smile. "I enjoy writing to him; and he's getting so he seems to like to answer my letters. He's having a mighty interesting time up there, Shirley. He's already thinking about going to law school when he gets through college."

"I hope we can afford to send him," Shirley agreed.

"We'll have to afford it," Henry assured her. "I don't know just how. You know, I'm sorry sometimes I didn't take out life insurance when I was younger. But people didn't take out insurance those days, the way they're beginning to now. The companies weren't so good, for one thing. You might pay premiums all your life and then never get anything in the end. Or I might have bought building loan shares, or something like that. I think we'd have saved more, if we'd had a regular plan for saving."

"I don't think we've ever wasted money," Shirley reminded him.

"Well," Henry said, "about all we ever saved was when we were paying for the house. I don't know but what we made a mistake not buying this house, when we came here to live. We'd have had it almost paid for by now; and we could borrow money on it. But we've got enough in the bank to put Dan through, anyhow; and with what he earns to help out, I guess we can manage law school."

They had during those spring months in which Henry was adjusting himself to his more or less static role in life many long talks together in this wise. Shirley was not analytical, but even Shirley began to discover the change in Henry.

"I'm glad in a way," she told Mary one day when they were alone together. "I want him to begin to enjoy his children. He's never had time to, before. But they're growing up now, and I suppose that makes a difference. Cynt is seventeen. She's really a young woman. I love to see the way she can get around Henry when she wants to! And he's crazy about her."

Mary said austerely: "Did you know that she writes every week to that Thad Gore?"

"Of course I do," Shirley replied. "Cynthia tells me everything."

"If she were my daughter," said Mary, "that would be worrying me."

"Cynthia says he's going to be a great doctor some day," Shirley insisted. "He's in medical school now, you know; and his work up there has been wonderful. He's led his class right along."

"Cynthia is pretty enough so she could marry anyone she's a mind to," Mary retorted. "It would be too bad if she was to marry a policeman's son."

Shirley laughed faintly. "I used to think Thad was a pretty rough boy," she agreed. "And he was. But I guess it was just that there was something in him, something that hadn't yet found an outlet. He's found an outlet now, Mary. I'm not worried about Thad any more."

"What does Henry think about it?" Mary asked, and Shirley laughed.

"Oh, he'll raise Cain when Cynt beings to talk about getting married," she agreed. "Fathers always do. But he'll have to come to it in the end." She added smilingly: "You talk mighty severe, Mary, but I notice you're sewing and making

dresses for Cynthia until all hours of the night, half the time."

"I want her to look nice," Mary smilingly agreed.

By the time Dan came home in June, Henry had passed through his period of adjustment. The wound was already healed; the scar remained, but the pain was gone. Dan planned to work during the summer as counselor in a boys' camp in Maine; and he was at home only for a little more than ten days. During this time Henry and his son drew toward one another. Shirley, watching them together, was tenderly amused to find Henry giving his son a certain deference, asking Dan's opinions and accepting them; and she smiled to see Dan try to stifle his boyish pride at this attitude on his father's part. Dan felt very mature that summer, with his first year in college behind him; and Henry said to Shirley on the night after Dan departed to take up his summer's work:

"Dan's a grown man already, isn't he?"

"He thinks he is," Shirley agreed. "But you and Dan will always be like little boys to me. You're so amusing together."

"How?" said Henry, frankly bewildered.

But she only laughed and kissed him. "I don't want to make you self-conscious!" she replied.

XV

Henry accepted the fact that so far as his own career was concerned he had reached his apogee with a gloomy resignation; but he was to discover that ambition is a restless bedfellow, and that he who sleeps contentedly sleeps more soundly than the man who is disturbed by dreams. The work now required of him in the office was not difficult. He was able to do it with no particular effort at concentration; and it put upon him no pressure except on Saturdays, when he and Barker had to endure together the frenzy of making up the bulky Sunday paper. For the rest of the time he sat leisurely at his desk, considering ideas for feature stories, dispatching men to get the necessary facts, turning over the collected materials to Ben Harris for rewriting or other preparation.

He had time for thought, and leisure for conversation; and

the result was a certain broadening of his interests and a quickening of his perceptions. Of late years, while he had read the *Tribune* and the other Boston papers as a part of his work, he had scanted those stories which did not concern the field of politics. But now his field was broader and more comprehensive. Young Morey turned in one day a story discussing the history of the purple glass in some of the windows along Beacon Street, and how it came to be there, and why when it was genuine it testified to the antiquity of the houses in which it was found. Henry was led to discuss the matter with Morey; and he found the young man well informed in such matters. Morey liked to study the traditions and the history of Boston, and Henry came to enjoy talking with him about them. Sometimes, when he had an hour to spare, he walked up the Hill and turned down into the narrow, dingy streets where age which was sometimes shabby yet dwelt in honorable dignity. He learned to see the beauty in the fan lights over doorways, and to discover something which satisfied his eye in the panelling and fluting on the doors themselves. And he went with Morey to see the interior of one of these houses, where the young man was welcomed as an ancient friend; and Morey pointed out to him the simple beauty of the old furniture and the graceful curves of the high, rounded doors.

Henry had not realized until now that he had for years been working under a pressure which left him unduly fatigued at the end of the day. He was now, except on Saturday nights, seldom really tired; and as compensation for his double duty on that day he was not required to come to the office at all on Tuesdays. The result was to bestow upon him the gift of leisure, a gift which he had never known before; and at first he was put to it to occupy his time, and used to move restlessly about the house, until even Shirley was provoked to say impatiently:

"I declare, Henry, I do wish you'd go out and take a walk or something! You're forever under foot!"

But after a while the new routine became familiar to him and he learned to enjoy it. It gave him, for one thing, time to see more of Cynthia; and he had time for long talks with Clem, who, though he still persisted in his insurance salesmanship, came home every day for lunch and was apt to spend the afternoons peacefully and contentedly in that apartment of his above the kitchen in the rear of the house. Henry often joined him there, and the two, like old cronies, had long talks

together, Clem puffing precisely at his straight stemmed pipe which always so exactly bisected his countenance. Henry regretted that he had given up smoking, and once or twice he tried one of Clem's pipes. But he had no pleasure in them, and in the end abandoned the attempt.

He liked to talk to Cynthia, and he found it possible after a while to gain her confidence. He told Shirley one night, in some concern, that Cynthia's thoughts and her heart were full of Thad Gore. "I think we ought to do something about it," he suggested. "She ought not to be so wrapped up in Thad at her age."

"She'll soon be eighteen," Shirley reminded him.

"If Thad's going to be a doctor," Henry protested, "it will be a long time before he can support a wife. He's still in medical school."

"I'm not worried about Cynthia," Shirley assured him. "Nor about Thad, either. A lot of things can happen before he's ready to marry anyone, and Cynthia's a pretty level-headed girl, Henry."

Henry had to confess this to be true.

Dan came home for a few days after his work in camp, before returning to college. He had saved during the summer a surprising amount of money; and he wished to give it to Henry, but Henry refused to accept this.

"You keep it, son," he said. "You'll need it for extra things. I have arranged my budget." He smiled a little at the word. "I can allow you five hundred dollars a year, all right. You don't need to worry about me, and anything you make on the side is your own."

Dan smiled. "Well, I don't want you to do it if it bothers you, sir," he said respectfully. "And any time it is a bother, I want you to tell me so, so that I can take some of the load off your hands."

"Don't worry," Henry warned him jocosely. "You're going to have load enough on your hands before you're through. I'm just waiting until you get through law school and set up in practice, and then your mother and I expect you to support us for the rest of our lives in ease and luxury!"

Dan grinned. "Well, I don't know so much about that," he retorted. And he added affectionately: "I can't imagine you sitting back and doing nothing, anyway, papa."

One evening after Dan had gone back to Hanover, Shirley said, with a curious twist to her smile:

"You know, it makes me want to cry, Henry, to think of Dan saving money. He's so proud of it. Imagine a boy like him saving as much as that!"

"Good thing," Henry assured her. "That's why I didn't let him give it to me. I want him to get the habit. It'll never do him any harm to get in the way of saving."

One of the effects of this opulence on Dan's part was that he came home to see them for Thanksgiving. "I thought I'd like to come," he explained apologetically, "because Fritz wants me to go home with him for the Christmas vacation."

"To New York?" Henry asked in faint surprise.

"Yes," said Dan. "I've never been over there. I didn't go down on any of the peerades, and I'd kind of like to go."

"Well I don't know," said Henry doubtfully. "I'll have to talk it over with your mother."

Dan flushed a little, but he said respectfully: "Of course I won't go if you don't want me to."

That night when Henry and Shirley were alone, Henry expressed his disappointment that Dan should want to be away from them at Christmas time. "I don't see how he can," he said. "It seems to me he ought to want to be at home."

Shirley must have felt this as keenly as Henry did, but she would not let him see it. "We must expect that, Henry," she reminded him. "Dan's growing up, and it's natural for a boy to want to see new places and new faces; and he's told me a lot about Fritz and I'm glad Dan's rooming with him. He seems to be a mighty nice boy, and the Hoffmans are an old New York family. Dan's told me a good deal about them, too."

"Oh," Henry agreed. "I don't mean to stand in his way. Of course, going to college, he's bound to meet people we've never known, Shirley." He added with a rueful grin: "I hope he never gets to be ashamed of us."

Shirley said stoutly: "Don't be ridiculous, Henry! You know we can count on Dan."

"I think it bothered him a little," said Henry, "when I said we'd talk it over. I don't think he meant to ask our permission to go at all. I think he was just telling us, not asking."

Shirley shook her head. "You don't realize how independent you were at his age," she reminded him.

"Well, I was earning my living, by the time I was as old as he is," Henry retorted.

"Dan's perfectly able to," Shirley replied, "if you want him to go to work." And her eyes twinkled in expectation of Henry's outbursts of protestation.

In the end they told Dan to go to New York with Fritz, as he proposed; and the boy, who must have seen some of the hurt in their voices and in their eyes, said gravely: "Of course I'll plan to come back this way and have a few days with you before I go on to Hanover."

"Well you don't need to, if it's inconvenient," Shirley told him, and he laughed and put his arm around her and said: "Don't be foolish! I don't care how inconvenient it is. You don't think I'm going to let the whole vacation go without seeing you and papa, do you?"

So they were somewhat comforted.

They saw him again for two days about the first of January, as he had promised; but Henry did not derive from this brief visit as much satisfaction as he had hoped, for there were matters stirring in the office which concentrated all his attention there.

2

Ben Harris, who had begun his professional career as a crusader, who had achieved the leadership in that crusade, and who had in the past exerted upon the journalistic manners and ethics of the city an influence exceeded by no other man of his time, was growing old. He had learned by the very exercise of power habits of thought more conservative and sedate than those which had actuated his more youthful efforts. He had at first only to consider how he might please those who read the *Tribune*; but since Warden assumed control of the paper he had had to learn how to please Warden, and to conceal his own opinions when they differed from those of the other man, and to do what he was told.

The lesson had not been an easy one, and its effect had been to dull the edge of that instinct which made him in the beginning a successful editor. His perception of news was not so keen as it had been; and Warden once or twice came storming into the office in the morning to protest that the *Tribune* had missed an opportunity to play up a current story in properly impressive fashion.

These incidents must have warned Ben of what was coming, but there was nothing he could do to alter the situation. He was losing the capacity for energetic resolution, for swift and sure decision. It was almost a relief to him when in January Warden brought a new man into the office. This newcomer was Frank Pearce, one of the generation of college

graduates who had for a dozen years been making their appearance in the newspaper field. Pearce was in his middle thirties—a short, square, vigorous, bullet-headed man, with close cropped hair and a heavy resolute jaw. Warden, more tactfully than he did most things, explained to Harris that he proposed to make some changes in the organization of the *Tribune*.

"Our daily circulation has been growing right along," he said, and Harris smiled a little, for he knew this to be not wholly true. The circulation had in fact been growing, but not so fast as it should have grown.

"But," Warden continued, "the Sunday paper isn't selling as it ought to. Barker is a good make-up man, but he hasn't a proper fund of ideas. I thought I'd ask you, Ben, to take charge in there and see if we can't make the Sunday paper come up where it ought to be, and let Pearce handle the news end. That all right with you?"

Harris—they were in Warden's office and alone together—sat for a moment without replying. It was not all right with him; it could never be all right. The work he had done for so many years was like the breath of life to him. He thought rebelliously that Warden knew this, and he wished to say as much; wished to say in a derisive tone:

"What difference does it make what I think? You've made up your mind!"

Ten years before he would have said something of the kind, or would have risen stormily and fought for his place; or would have resigned on the spot. But Ben was older now, and the adventurer in him was dead, so he merely said:

"I'd be glad to try it if you want me to."

"What do you think of Pearce?" Warden asked.

"I've heard about him," Harris confessed. "I know he's done some good work in Syracuse."

"Of course he's a stranger in town," Warden agreed. "That is, he is now. But he's a Harvard man. He can pick up old acquaintances. And after all, a stranger may have a better perception of news values than we ourselves. We may be too close to things here to appreciate the importance of some of them."

"That's quite possible," Harris agreed. "At least, it's worth a trial."

So Harris came to take Mat Barker's desk in the Sunday department; and Mat, who was left with nothing commensurate with his abilities to do, held his peace for a week and

then resigned and went to New York to take a place he had found for himself there. Henry at first had feared that Mat would stay on and make up the Sunday paper while Ben took charge of gathering the material to fill its pages. That arrangement, he feared, might result in his own demotion or dismissal; and he was worried until Mat took himself away. Then his spirits revived and he looked forward almost eagerly to the prospect of working directly under Ben Harris again. Ben he knew of old, and he knew Ben's respect for his own abilities. The change was to be more far reaching than had at first appeared, but for a time all went smoothly enough.

It happened that in February of that year Jimmy Horn was killed; shot by some unidentified person, as a result, Ben Harris told Henry, of a gang row in Boston's underworld. Ben and Henry had some talk together at the time, and Ben said thoughtfully:

"Jimmy used to have quite a nose for news, Henry. I've often thought that if he'd gone at it in the right way, if he'd had the character to support his abilities he might have made a great city editor."

"I never liked him," Henry confessed frankly. "Of course I'm sorry for him now, but Jimmy and I never did get along."

"No, you wouldn't like him," Ben agreed. "I didn't either. There was a rotten streak in him somewhere. But he did have that nose for news. He was the best man we've had at police headquarters since I can remember, and my memory goes back forty years."

He added: "There's a curious fatality that pursues newspaper men, Henry. If they stick to the game, it gets them in the end, one way or another; and if they try to take advantage of it, it's likely to get them, too. That was what Jimmy did. You know he kept his sideline secret for a while, and he used to work the sporting department for writeups of his boxers, without letting them know his interest in the matter. I fired him for it, when I found it out."

"I didn't know you fired him," Henry commented. "I thought he quit."

"Yes," Ben said. "I had to let him go."

He sat a moment silent, as though to add something, and then stirred and picked up a sheet of copy on his desk and Henry turned away.

Pearce, the new man, proved to have a dynamic personality and a driving force which showed its results not only in the columns of the *Tribune,* but also in the atmosphere of the

city room. One of his innovations, to which he persuaded Warden to assent, was to rip out the partitions so that the Sunday department, which had been isolated, now occupied one of the further angles of the city room itself, and thus the whole field of the news gathering activities of the paper was under Pearce's eye. He even insisted that Jack Point, the dramatic critic, should give up his private office and move his desk downstairs, and Point, though he was rebellious, submitted just the same.

Henry learned to be conscious of Pearce's eye upon him now and then. He turned his head sometimes to see the editor watching him, across the length of the room; and other men had that same feeling—had the feeling that they were being personally spurred and urged by the vigorous personality of the young executive. This was no empty fancy on their part, for Pearce had very early justified Warden's confidence in him, and Warden came more and more to rely upon the judgment of the younger man.

Now and then someone was discharged; and now and then a new figure appeared in the office. There was an uneasiness in the air which had its effect in stimulating the efforts of the staff, even though it might disturb their sleep at night. Early in June, this uneasiness came to a climax in the discharge of old Pat Dryden from his safe harbor in the reference department. His assistant, Louise Martin, Warden's niece, was given his place.

Dryden disappeared humbly enough, but his going evoked from some of the older and more valiant men murmurs of increasing discontent, and Pearce seemed to sense this, to realize that he had tried their loyalty to the breaking point; for there were for a while no more discharges. And a little later, office politics were to be swallowed up in a larger, less personal interest.

3

Dan went to Europe that summer, on a cattle boat, with three of his fraternity brothers. Henry and Shirley had their misgivings. They were afraid Dan could not endure the hardships involved in the excursion, for he was still extravagantly thin and not particularly strong, and he was subject to severe colds which sometimes confined him to bed for a week on end. But he laughed at their fears and assured them the sea air would be good for him; and since they did not venture to

forbid the enterprise he took their silence for consent. He sailed about the middle of June, three or four days after his return from Hanover; and Henry went down with Joe Downing, who still covered the waterfront news, to see the steamer swing out into the harbor and pick up speed as she headed for the open sea.

Henry had seen very little of Downing for years, though long ago they had been in mild degree young roisterers together, when David Pell formed the third member of their triumvirate. They lunched together this day, and had some talk thereafter; and Joe told Henry that he was married years agone and had four children and lived in Chelsea, and that all was well with him.

"I tried to get my boys to go to college," he confessed. "But they said they didn't want to. They're anxious to get to work and stand on their own feet."

"Dan wanted to go," Henry said proudly. "Nothing else would do. I suppose," he added disingenuously, "it is a waste of time. But I didn't feel like standing in his way."

"I don't know," Downing replied. "I guess it's a good thing if a boy wants to do it." He added: "He'll have a pretty good time on this boat. I know the captain. He's a good old scout."

Henry had from this conversation some reassurance which he bore to Shirley. "They'll be over there in ten days, Joe told me," he said. "So we'll probably have a letter from Dan in three or four weeks. He'll have plenty of time to write, on the boat going over."

"I wish he were coming right back," Shirley said. "I hate to think of him going around Europe alone. Suppoe he catches cold."

"I guess Dan will have to learn to take care of himself," Henry reminded her. "He's had colds before, since he went away from home."

"But I think they look after them up at Hanover," Shirley protested. "And he won't have anybody to take care of him in Europe."

The fact that she was worried lessened Henry's own concern, and during the week succeeding he was able somewhat to reassure her. But their anxiety awoke again, a fortnight after Dan sailed, when the Austrian archduke was assassinated at Serajevo and ugly murmurs emanating from the European chancelleries began to make their appearance in the newspapers. And their fears steadily increased during the succeeding weeks, while the pot came swiftly to a boil. They read,

secretly and without letting each other know that they did so, the accounts of the troubles of refugees in England and in France, unable to find passage home; and they had for weeks no word from Dan at all, and Shirley conceived the idea that he might have enlisted in the British army.

Henry shook his head at that. "Not him," he replied. "Dan's a fine fellow, and he's got a brain; but he's not an adventurer."

"He is, too," she insisted. "He's just the sort who would."

"He wouldn't do it," Henry was sure, "without letting us know. And he wouldn't do it now anyway, Shirley. He's too intent on going through college. He'll be home, you'll see."

Dan did in fact come home. He appeared at the *Tribune* office one day in shabby clothes, with a week's beard, his eyes shining and his tongue quick with talk of the wonders he had seen. And Henry and Ben Harris and two or three of the other men gathered around to listen to him, and Ben suggested that he sit down and write two or three columns for the *Tribune* about his experiences.

Dan said laughingly: "Two or three columns won't touch it, Mr. Harris. I could write enough to fill your paper!"

"Go ahead," said Ben. "We'll pay you space rates, and use all you can write, I should say."

Henry interrupted at this. "Wait a minute," he protested good humoredly. "This boy's got to get a shave and go out and kiss his mother. You go ahead, Dan, and I'll call her up on the telephone and tell her you're coming. We've been pretty nearly wild, wondering what had become of you."

"I sent you a cable," Dan replied.

"It never came," Henry said.

"Then I was robbed," Dan exclaimed laughingly. "I'll go back and take seven and sixpence out of that operator's hide, one of these days."

"The cables have been jammed," Harris reminded them. "I suppose it didn't come through. But you go on out and see your mother, young man, and then come back; or write it out there if you want to. Can you use a typewriter?"

"Yes," Dan assured him. "But I haven't got one at home. My father's is pretty well busted up."

"All right, come in here," Ben told him. "We ought to have your stuff by Thursday night at the latest."

"I'll be in," Dan assured him. "What do you pay? I need the money!"

"Five dollars a column," Harris replied.

"At that rate, it's going to cost you just short of a million," Dan said cheerfully, and Harris laughed and said again:

"Well, run along. You'll have to make us a cut rate if you write as much as that."

Dan was as good as his word. He came in with Henry the next morning, and Harris gave him a typewriter; and the boy pounded at it all that day, and returned the next day to continue setting down the tale of his adventures. He had a check for seventy-four dollars when he was through, and he exhibited it gleefully to Henry.

"Besides that," he told his father, "I came home with some money in my pocket!"

"How much?" Henry asked, and Dan laughed.

"Sixty-two cents!" he replied. "So I'm all set for this year."

He went gaily back to Hanover in the fall.

Now that Dan was safely home, their immediate personal interest in the conflagration in Europe somewhat slackened. They had another concern, for Shirley was insisting that Cynthia should go to college that fall. Cynthia had at first refused to consent to this. She urged that her father and mother could not afford it and that it was an unnecessary expenditure; but Shirley told Henry one day:

"I think the reason is she knows Thad Gore is going to be in Boston this winter. He's going to be house officer at the City Hospital, and she thinks she'll be able to see a lot of him. I think she's afraid college will interfere with it."

"We'll talk her out of that," Henry said confidently.

But though they tried, they did not at first succeed in doing so. Cynthia put them off. She saw Thad occasionally, and she confessed that he advised her to do as they wished; but she refused to agree until one day in mid-September Thad came to the house a little after noon, his eyes shining, to tell her that he was sailing for England the following day; that he was to join an English surgical unit for the invaluable experience to be had in attending the wounded there. Henry was not at home; but he heard from Shirley that night the story of what passed between them.

"I expected Cynt to protest," Shirley confessed. "I thought see would be wild. I didn't think she'd let him go."

"Let him go?" Henry said laughingly. "I know enough about that young man to know that he'll do what he thinks he ought to, no matter what Cynt says."

"That was it exactly," Shirley agreed. "It was awfully sweet

to watch her, Henry. You'd have thought she was a mother seeing her only son go away to war. She never made a single protest, just said: "Why of course, Thad!' And: 'That will be wonderful for you, won't it?' And: 'You must tell me what you're going to need. You'll need woolen socks, won't you? I can learn to knit them for you.'

"When they reached that point," Shirley added, "I left them alone together. I think they spent most of the afternoon planning his wardrobe."

So Thad departed, and they had thereafter, through him and Cynthia, an almost proprietary feeling toward the conflict in Europe. Also Thad had decided the question of college for Cynthia. She came to Shirley, a day or two after he was gone, and said Thad wished her to go to Simmons, and that she was willing to do so.

Henry said approvingly to Shirley that night: "I'm not so much worried about his influence over Cynthia as I used to be. I'm beginning to think he's a pretty leavel-headed young man."

XVI

One day in December, Henry, on the way from the office to the station, was attracted by the sight of four or five men standing before the window of a tobacconist's shop; and he stopped to see what it was that had attracted their attention. A man in the window was making cigars, and Henry watched him for a few minutes with a growing interest. His operations were quick and dexterous. With one hand he caught up from a tray at his side a loose handful of wrinkled tobacco leaves, which he compressed and rolled into a cylinder of the approximate size of the finished cigar; with his other hand he chose a leaf for the wrapper, laid it on the board before him, cut it with a swift rocking motion of his knife and rolled the filler into the wrapper. The result, when he had applied a little gum to the end, was so neat and so uniform that his work was elevated to a plane not far below that

of the artist; and Henry thought it remarkable, and paid more and more attention to the man himself.

The cigar maker was a curiously inoffensive figure; a little man whose hair was somewhat too long, whose eyes were distorted by heavy spectacles, and whose mustache failed to conceal the fact that his mouth was not only small but loose and without much strength inherent in the line of his lips. Yet he worked so swiftly and in a way so lovingly, as though each cigar he made were dear to him, that Henry's imagination was more and more caught and held by him. After a few minutes, something impelled him to step inside the store and speak to the man; but the cigar maker looked up at him with uncomprehending eyes, and the proprietor of the establishment came to Henry's side and saw what Henry wished to do and said condescendingly:

"He can't understand you. He's a Belgian."

This incident served more than anything else to present the war to Henry as a reality. Thad Gore was in France, and Cynthia's heart went with him there; but that relation was curiously incredible to Henry. He had not brought himself to accept the fact of his daughter's devotion. On the other hand, this little cigar maker was an actual Belgian in the flesh, and the only one, so far as Henry knew, whom he had ever seen. There was something in his appearance and demeanor which seemed to Henry characteristic of his abused country. He used to stop and watch the man at work, and while he watched, his indignation at the Germans waxed and grew.

He made some inquiries and found that while the man was in fact a Belgian, he had been in this country for a number of years and was well contented here. But Henry's imagination rejected this statement of facts. He clothed the figure of the man in drama, and he went so far as to attempt at last to write a short story about him. In the story, this cigar maker returned to Belgium to seek to discover there his family, left behind when he emigrated to this country years before; and Henry devised for his adventurer a series of encounters with the full force and power of the German war machine, and brought him home at last, his search unavailing, his shoulders bowed with sorrow.

Henry could not resist a happy ending, however; so when the Belgian in his story came home, it was to find his wife and his children here before him, transported by the benevolence of the Belgian Relief Commission.

When the story was done, Shirley liked it, and so did Mary; and under their urgencies, a new ambition vaguely stirring in him, Henry dispatched the manuscript to the editorial office of a magazine; but the printed rejection slip which was enclosed when it returned put a period to the incident and to Henry's half-born hopes. He had called the story "The Odyssey of Peter Maardelinck," and that title took its place beside "I Speak of Africa" in a dusty corner of his memory. But he never tried writing a short story again.

The effect of the war was to extend Henry's horizon. The first months were full of confusion and incredulity, of the effort to understand; but when in France the warfare entered into its static phase, and tremendous battlelines were flung across the face of Poland, Henry's imagination was caught and quickened. He learned to find romance in maps; drew maps of his own, and upon them charted from week to week the changing lines of the opposing armies. He sang—and Henry's youthful promise as a singer had never been realized, so that the effort was pleasing only to himself—he sang "Tipperary" or whistled it about the house till even Shirley, usually patient enough, begged him to be still. He became interested in the history of Poland, and someone introduced him to Sienkiewicz' trilogy and he read "With Fire and Sword" and "Pan Michael" and "The Deluge" with a pounding pulse.

His newly aroused consciousness of the remoter world extended not only to France and Russia, but it increased his appreciation of his more immediate surroundings. He began to have more and more often a keen and poignant sense of the beauty of the familiar scenes in which he moved. He had had such moments long ago, when he was emerging from boyhood into maturity; but in the steady drive of life for the last twenty years he had almost forgotten to be conscious of beauty at all. Now when spring came and chance took him one day along Beacon Street, the sight of the crocuses in the front yards there made him wish to weep with delight; and when he went home he insisted that they should plant crocuses in the small lawn about their house, and Shirley agreed that they would do so at the proper season.

He had during the first months of the war an increasing hostility toward the Germans, accepting without question all the crimes imputed to them; and this feeling on his part led him into many arguments in the office, for sentiment there was strongly divided. Those who were from the first pro-ally were in a definite minority; an aristocratic minority, in its

way, since Mr. Warden was the leader in this school of thought. But when the *Lusitania* was sunk, most of the men agreed that under the circumstances the United States as a matter of self-respect must forthwith enter the war. The months that followed, with the interminable interchange of notes which led to nothing, served to revive that habitual cynicism characteristic of the old newspaper man who has seen so many crusades come and go. There had been a moment when they were—even the most sophisticated of them—actuated by a martial zeal; but while they cried out for deeds, they were fed with words, until they learned to smile again and speak indifferently of the colossal spectacle unrolling overseas.

There was one somewhat more direct and immediate effect of the war upon Henry's own fortunes. During these early months there was a tremendous amount of copy to be handled and sifted; and this was especially true of the material which went into the Sunday paper. Local news was for a while at a discount, for every reader was hungry for the smallest crumb of information about what was happening in France. Much of this material came into the office either by telegraph or in manuscript form, from the propaganda sources already being established; and to handle this mass of stuff put an additional burden upon the copy desk, while at the same time it lessened the work required of the Sunday department. Pearce, the city editor, accordingly shifted Henry to the copy desk, to assist in taking care of the new burden; and Henry accepted the transfer without protest because he saw its necessity. But he had none the less regrets, for he had enjoyed his brief period of work under Ben Harris, and had hoped from that relation great and greater things.

He realized one day in the second year of the war that there had come about a change in him; and sometimes when he was at leisure, he considered and sought to analyze it. He was no longer, even where his work was concerned, capable of any continuing enthusiasm. He had acquired a habit of sitting still, not reading, scarcely even thinking, unconscious of what went forward about him; and he was becoming, in the common parlance, absent-minded. Shirley sometimes pointed this out to him; and one night when she had been chiding him for some forgetfulness, he asked:

"Don't you know the answer, Hon?"

"I know you're too careless to remember," she retorted.

He shook his head, smiling at her gently. "It isn't that so much," he assured her. "It's simply that I'm getting old."

The war did not for a long time come close to Henry, but it struck more keenly at his son. Dan had expected to bring home for the Christmas holidays his roommate, young Hoffman, whom he had visited in New York the year before; and Shirley and Henry looked forward to this visitation with some misgivings. At once curious to see Fritz, of whom Dan wrote so affectionately, and fearful what the boy would think of them and of Dan's home, they were almost relieved when a fortnight before his coming Dan wrote that Fritz could not accept the invitation. And when Dan came home he explained to them that Fritz had gone back to Germany.

"His grandfather came from Germany," he explained. "And of course his father and Fritz, too, were good Americans; but as long as the United States isn't involved in this, Fritz felt he ought to be fighting for his people, and he's gone back to do his share."

Henry said explosively: "He must be crazy! Anyone who doesn't have to must be crazy to fight for Germany."

Dan colored a little. "Fritz isn't crazy," he replied. "He's really an awfully conscientious fellow. He didn't want to go. He's not an adventurer at all. He's rather quiet, and studies hard; and he isn't particularly strong. He went from a sense of duty, father."

Shirley, more swift than Henry to understand her son, said quickly: "Your father didn't mean that, exactly, Dan. He just didn't understand."

"I know," Dan agreed. "I feel the same way father does in a way. Fritz and I talked it over quite a lot together, and I can't see his point of view at all. But it was a sense of duty all right. He dreaded it. I think as a matter of fact that's why he went, because he dreaded it so."

Dan and Cynthia came very close to a quarrel over this matter. Cynthia had had a letter from Thad, and while Thad wrote in a judicial and impassive way, he nevertheless painted a picture of the horrible things his daily life encountered which had had a tremendous effect upon Cynthia. She thought of Thad as in danger, and as in danger from the Germans; and since this was true, she hated Germany and all its works. Henry and Shirley had to use some tact and some discretion to reconcile the differences between her and Dan.

They were able to achieve at last only a compromise, a regime of tolerance.

Cynthia had a party during that vacation. Shirley and Mary were for weeks beforehand in a fever of preparation. It was a watch party, on New Year's eve; and they had agreed that the guests should wear costumes. Helen Kirconnel was there, and the Heywood girls, and two or three girls from Simmons; and three or four young men Cynthia had met during her months there, and some of Dan's friends. The living room and dining room could be thrown together; and they borrowed the Heywoods' phonograph and there was dancing.

The whole affair was to Henry somehow affrighting. During the hours before the guests arrived, he was in an ague of apprehension, shivering till his teeth chattered, and annoying Shirley and Mary and even Cynthia with his questions and suggestions, until Shirley said explosively:

"Dan, take your father for a walk! I can't stand him around the house any longer!"

Later, Henry was at first a little stunned by the clamor of gay young voices; and he stood pale and silent, his eyes unnaturally wide, watching what went forward. The rooms, which were large enough when they were alone, seemed crowded now. It appeared to his disordered senses that there were hundreds here; but after a time he began to catch the infection of the general gaiety, and Cynt's friends went out of their way to be nice to him. One of them—a girl named Janet Sutherland—insisted on teaching him to dance. Before this process had been long continued, everyone else had stopped to watch them; and Henry, a little intoxicated at being so conspicuous, surprised himself and surprised Shirley even more by his hilarious efforts to do as he was told. Afterward, when they were left alone together, he felt miserably that he had made a fool of himself and told Shirley so. But Shirley said:

"Don't be absurd! You were fine! I was so glad you entered into things the way you did."

And Cynt reassured him, too. "Janet thinks you're wonderful, father," she declared.

But Dan preserved a kindly silence, and Henry was grateful for this. Whatever Shirley and Cynt might say, he knew in his heart that he had been more than a little absurd; and Dan of course must know this, too. Henry was glad Dan refrained from expressing this opinion.

There was developing between Dan and Henry a closer union, and it was curiously and definitely true that in this partnership Dan, who had risen to an equal place, began to assume the ascendency. Henry, tremendously proud of his son, gave the boy more and more deference; and Dan, perceiving this, was faintly humbled by it and took care not to take advantage of his new estate. His world was constantly broadening; he was adventuring into social fields where Henry and Shirley had never entered nor were ever likely to, and they were even more keenly conscious of this than he.

The first summer of the war he worked once more as counselor, in a summer camp where a number of his classmates were similarly engaged; and during the days that he was at home before his senior year began they found themselves a little breathless at the growth and change in him. Shirley said ruefully to Henry the night after he went back to Hanover:

"I feel sometimes that I hardly know him, Henry, any more. I think college has made such a change in Dan."

"It's done wonders for him," Henry agreed.

"It has," she assented. "But I'm almost sorry. I'm afraid we're losing him."

He shook his head at that, chiding her tenderly. "You don't need to be afraid of losing Dan," he assured her. "He'll always be our boy, whatever happens. There's too much good stuff in him for him ever to grow away from us."

Yet during Dan's Christmas vacation that year, Shirley had cause to renew her fears; for their son was out almost every evening. He had bought evening clothes; and when he was dressed and ready to leave the house, even Shirley hardly dared kiss him goodby. One night when he was gone she frankly wept, and Henry said almost angrily:

"What's the matter with you? I don't see what there is to cry about. I should think you'd be proud of him. I never saw him looking so fine."

"I am proud of him," Shirley sobbed. "Awfully proud! That's what makes me cry."

3

They were not wholly conscious of the fact that during these months their own social background was widening. This was in part due to their participation in the war work activities of one kind and another which engaged the attention of the community. Mary, always skilful with her needle when

her eyes would serve, was particularly active in this direction now, finding in it pleasure such as she always had in serving others. Her fingers were never idle, and Shirley, after some difficulties, learned to knit, and struggled with the tasks the Red Cross gave her to do until by her own failures her nerves were worn ragged and her eyes were weary. Cynthia, who heard at irregular intervals from Thad, had quietly refused to return for a second year at Simmons.

"There's too much for me to do," she told Henry and Shirley; and they sought without success to alter her decision.

"It's Thad's influence," Shirley told Henry. "He doesn't mean to, but when he tells her how things are over there, and how everyone in England is working all the time, making clothes for the soldiers, and hospital supplies and so on, she can't bear not to have a part in it. She wants to go over, Henry. She's spoken to me several times."

"That's ridiculous," Henry protested, and something touched his heart with the cold hand of fear. "That's out of the question. I won't listen to it. I hope you told her so."

"I did," Shirley agreed. "I think I've put her off, at least for a little while."

Henry said with a rueful smile: "That's one thing I won't stand for. I won't have my little girl going over there and mixing up in the war."

"She's not such a very little girl any longer," Shirley reminded him. "She's almost twenty."

"Gorry!" Henry said. "It doesn't seem possible, does it? I think of her as a kid still."

"I don't think she'd be so mature if it weren't for Thad," Shirley agreed. "But Cynt is simply wild about him, in a curiously sober, level-headed way. Thad's pretty serious-minded, too, you know, Henry. He wasn't as a boy, but he's changed and settled down. I think he's going to be a great surgeon some day, and Cynt is sure of it. And it's made her seem older than she really is. If it weren't for Thad, she'd be more interested in playing around with the boys here, and with her girl friends. But as it is, she thinks they're silly. She's told me so."

"I suppose all girls are inclined to be prigs," Henry agreed, and laughed a little. "I remember I used to think Mary was, when I was a youngster. She was always trying to reform me."

"It's because girls are so much older than boys the same age," Shirley told him. "They acquire a sense of responsibility before they're through with short dresses. They have

to, Henry. You men need such a lot of taking care of that they have to learn pretty early to be on the job!"

With Dan away, Henry found it to be more and more true that Cynt and Shirley and Mary were combined against him. There was no particular hostility in their alliance; it was simply that they were united in their idea, in their aims, and in their activities; and the fact that he was out of sympathy with much which they did set him apart from them. The effect was to drive him to see more and more of his father-in-law, and he came to spend long evenings with Clem in the sitting room off the kitchen, with the comfortable warmth of the stove between them.

Clem, after the shock of the catastrophe which had made life for a while seem to him not only empty but ended, had in these later years somewhat recovered his philosophy. His work had renewed his contacts with people, and had refreshed and reinvigorated the man himself to an extraordinary degree. Henry found it pleasing to talk with him; found it curiously true that they were now of an age together. The interval of fifteen years or so between them, which twenty years before had seemed tremendous, was almost wiped out. Clem was an old man, his hair white as snow; but his countenance was round and rubicund, and his spirit was in some respects even more youthful than Henry's own. For Henry, always inclined to sober habits of thought, was older than there was any need for him to be.

Shirley approved the intimacy between them, and she and Mary sometimes spoke of it together. When in January of the second year of the war Clem died, it left for a while a tremendous gap in Henry's universe. The old man's death was all he could have wished it to be. He had had no illness, no ill turn of any kind; but one morning he failed to appear for breakfast, and when Henry went into the room behind the kitchen and called up the stairs to wake him, Clem did not respond. After a second summons, Henry went up the stairs and discovered the old man peacefully abed, wearing in death the similitude of sleep.

He left, to their considerable astonishment, two savings bank books, showing that he had accumulated during the last few years something over twelve hundred dollars. But at some time he had changed his first will, made as a reproachful gesture, in which Henry was named as beneficiary, to leave all that he possessed to Shirley. The sum came at a fortunate time for them. Shirley's illness and the steady drain of Dan's

college expenses, even though the boy had developed some earning power of his own, had seriously depleted Henry's savings. Also, the cost of all that went to make up their living had increased, so that Henry had in the bank before Clem died only about eleven hundred dollars, and was beginning to be seriously concerned over the problem of putting Dan through law school. Cynt's decision not to continue at Simmons had been in its way a relief to him and to Shirley; and Shirley's inheritance now freed them for the time from all financial cares. They were able to look forward to the future with a confident eye.

The war had settled into a rut. The likelihood that the United States would be involved appeared to have passed; the era of notes and negotiations was at its height, and they were inured to the tremendous cataclysm in progress on the other side of the Atlantic. They saw no immediate prospect that it would come closer home to them. Henry was much more concerned nowadays as to what Dan was to do than as to what was to happen to Germany, to England, and to France. He was no longer particularly interested in his own work, except in so far as it enabled him to serve his son.

XVII

It sometimes seemed to Henry that life had a pace like the pace of a sled sliding down hill. His youth was infinitely remote from him, but he could still remember how in his boyhood the years had seemed to drag, while now they were passed and behind him like whispers in the night. Sometimes their swift passage frightened him. If a year could go so quickly, then ten years, and twenty, and thirty would take only a little longer time. And thirty years, he reminded himself, must cover the utmost span of what life remained to him. Thirty years from now he would be dead.

At other times he thought: "But as far as that goes, I might as well die now, any time. I'll never accomplish anything more. I've done all I can. I'm probably going down hill as swiftly as the years."

He had these moods of hopelessness and of despair when

his thoughts were fixed on his work or on the world at large. But because it was so painful to contemplate the world around him, to see how other men advanced or retrograded, how they developed and how old age degenerated and decayed, Henry more and more withdrew his attention from these scenes and concentrated his thoughts, his hopes, and his ambitions within the circle of his home. The war had by the very magnitude of the spectacle which it displayed dulled the sensibilities of the world. The slaughter of thousands now was of no more immediate and personal importance than the slaughter or the death of a hundred or so in shipwreck or disaster would have been ten years before. Men were hardened to the spectacle of death. The war was little more than a changing, irregular line upon a map, and a list of names and figures in the newspapers. Even the Sussex episode, in March after Clem died, would mean, Henry realized, only another sequence of notes; and the Battle of Jutland in May provoked in him only a transitory interest because of its spectacular and pictorial aspects. He could not see the war as an affair close to his own life.

The grippe epidemic of that winter was by some people attributed to the conflict, but it touched none of Henry's acquaintances. The Ford Peace Ship, although among the correspondents on board was David Pell, appealed only to his sense of humor. Pearce had sent Pell abroad on that expedition, and when it ended ineffectually Pell was given a roving assignment; and a new man, one of Pearce's former associates in Syracuse, was sent to Washington. These things Henry knew, but they were to him no more than casual gossip, or headlines which appeared one day and disappeared the next.

Curtis Guild, who had once been kind to him, had died the year before; and his death reminded Henry how completely he himself was now removed from the political world, for he had not seen Guild since he was withdrawn from the State House job. The presidential conventions in June failed to interest him. Roosevelt's announcement that he was out of politics seemed like an echo of Henry's own attitude. To him Hughes was an impersonality of no immediate importance one way or the other.

Ten years before, all these matters would have seemed in Henry's eyes worth attention and study and comment, but now he was a great deal more interested in the fact that Dan was to graduate in June.

Neither Henry nor Shirley had ever been in Hanover, and they had planned for more than a year that on the occasion of Dan's Commencement exercises they would go. Dan himself counted on it, writing home in enthusiastic terms, displaying at the prospect an exuberant delight which was somewhat out of character with his habitual reserve.

"He certainly wants us," Henry confessed to Shirley one night when they had read his latest letter. "Doesn't sound like Dan at all. He's fairly raving."

Shirley said gently: "That's because he's growing up, Henry. So long as he was a boy, and conscious of the fact that he was soon going to be a man, he tried to be dignified; but now he's forgetting to be self-conscious. He doesn't have to behave like a man, to make people know he is one. Don't you see?"

"I know," Henry agreed. "I can remember when I first went on the paper. I used to imitate the men there, and try to talk the way they did, and smoke and drink beer and all that. I kind of got out of the habit by and by, but I've never been much of a hand to let myself go, Shirley."

She said, with no sorrow in her tone but with understanding still: "You've never had a chance, dear. You've always had so much responsibility."

"Gorry!" said Henry. "I've never felt it that way. I've always just gone along anyway I could." And he added after a moment: "I wonder how much it will cost us to go up to Hanover."

"I don't care what it costs," said Shirley. "I'm going to see my boy graduate. I want to hear him make his speech."

"You bet!" Henry agreed. "Say, I'll bet he'll pick us out of the crowd. I bet he won't look at anybody but us, all the time he's talking. You know, I can understand Dan a little better than I used to. He's pretty crazy about his father and mother, Shirley. Particularly about you!"

"I hope he won't be ashamed of us, up there," Shirley said, and Henry laughed at her.

"Now you're fishing," he protested, but she insisted seriously:

"No I'm not. You don't realize it, Henry, but everybody there, all the mothers and the sisters and the best girls, will have their nicest clothes; and the boys will be showing their

mothers off, and of course they'll be prouder of the nice looking ones than they are of the others."

"Don't be an idiot!" Henry told her severely. "That's one thing about any normal boy—his mother is always the best looking woman around, for him."

She was willing to be reassured. "Do you think so?"

"I know so," said Henry, and he added thoughtfully: "I remember, although I didn't actually realize it at the time, that I always thought my mother was about as beautiful as any woman could be. She always wore an apron with a torn pocket on it."

"That's the way you've always remembered her, isn't it?" she commented.

He nodded, laughing a little. "Yes," he confessed. "Of course I don't suppose it's true, but that's the only mental picture I have of her now. I think she had torn it on a door knob, that day, and I happened to see it." He added a little wearily: "I can't actually see her face at all. All I know is that she was beautiful!"

"Well," said Shirley in a more sprightly tone, "I'm going to be sure there aren't any torn pockets on my apron, if I wear one at Hanover!" She added: "I hope we can persuade Cynt to go."

"Of course she'll go," Henry insisted. "Cynt and Mary, too. The whole family. Dan's got rooms engaged for us, and we're not going to disappoint him."

"Cynt is so busy nowadays," Shirley pointed out. "She's afraid she can't manage."

"I'll settle that," Henry said good naturedly. "I guess she can let her work go for three or four days when her brother graduates from college."

And in the end they did in fact all go to Hanover. Henry had arranged to take his vacation in the last two weeks of June, so that his work should not interfere. Mary and Shirley were for weeks beforehand busy with their sewing, making new dresses or shortening the skirts of old ones to conform to the current style. For Mary there was little sewing to be done. She had long since reverted to her habit of wearing a plain black dress upon all occasions. Sometimes, when circumstances demanded it, this was a black silk; and she planned to wear her black silk at Hanover, though she would travel in something better calculated to endure the rigors of the journey. But for Shirley and for Cynthia it was more of a

problem. Though Cynthia professed complete indifference in such matters, Shirley and Mary worried over her and did what they could for her, overruling the girl's impatience when it was necessary to keep her at home for an afternoon of fitting.

Shirley herself still retained the tall slender figure of her girlhood, and Henry, when one night she tried on some of her things, told her fondly: "By gorry, you'll be prettier than any other girl there! I'm going to have to fight off every boy on the campus!"

She blushed with happiness, and bade him not to be absurd, and as an afterthought reminded him that he on his part ought to have a new suit for the occasion. Henry said:

"Pshaw! There's no sense in that. This suit I've got on was new last spring, and it's good for another year. And my other suit is good enough, too."

"Your other suit's black," she retorted. "And that one is almost black. I like you better in gray, Henry."

"To go with my hair," he suggested, a grim amusement in his tone, and she laughed at him.

"You're as proud of your half dozen gray hairs as if you were still in high school," she said. "You don't look a day over thirty, right now!"

"My waist line alone is more than that!" Henry chuckled, and she said:

"Well, if you will take three lumps of sugar in your coffee, and live on bread and butter most of the time! But just the same, you've got to have a new suit, and if you don't go in and pick it out, I'll go in for you." She added more vigorously: "I think I'll go in anyway, Henry. If you go, you'll get something appropriate for a funeral, and I want you to be youthful and gay. And you'll need new shoes."

"I really ought to have a new straw hat," he agreed. "My old one has been bleached now for three years, and it's beginning to get a little feeble."

"Of course you must," she assented.

There were many of these details to require their attention; they were busy with them day upon day. Henry's new suit was so light a gray—Shirley had chosen it from samples he brought home—that he felt vaguely as though he were in his underclothes, and confessed a profound embarrassment at the sensation. "Besides," he told her, "it will show every cinder on the train."

"You're not going to wear it on the train," she retorted. "You're going to take it up in your suitcase and put it on after you get there."

Dan wrote them explicit directions. "Get off at the Junc," he said. "I'll meet you there with a car. I want you to see something of the country on the way up. All you have to do is get to the Junc and put yourselves in my hands. I'll look after you after that, and I've got a sophomore to take care of you when I'm tied up, and see that you don't miss anything. You'll like him, and he'll be able to show Cynt a good time!"

The journey, as the day approached, assumed more and more the aspect of an ordeal. Henry had made his plans for it far in advance, engaging seats on the train, buying his tickets ten days before the day of their departure, and looking in his pocketbook half a dozen times a day at irregular intervals to be sure the tickets were still there. When sometimes they were not in the flap where he expected to find them, he had moments of stark and desperate panic; and once he could not find them at all. He was in the office at the time, and he rushed to the telephone to confess the catastrophe to Shirley. But she said reassuringly:

"I took them out, Henry. I meant to tell you. You've been worrying about them, so I took them out last night and I've got them safely put away."

He was immensely relieved. "Gorry, I wish I'd thought of that before. I'd have turned them over to you long ago. Now you be sure you don't forget them the day we go to the train!"

"I'm used to remembering things," Shirley reminded him.

Their departure from the house seemed to them as momentous an event as though they had been about to take ship for Europe. Even Cynthia to some small extent caught the infection, and her cheeks were bright and her eyes were dancing with excitement. On the way to town and across the city to the North Station they felt themselves the target of every eye. Henry was wearing his new hat and it seemed to him, like the helmet of Navarre, to stand out among the dingy headgears of the men about him. Shirley had a new hat, too, which Henry thought beautiful and becoming. It helped him to forget his own to watch her, and he was filled with wonder at her ability to appear unconscious of it, to wear it and her new suit as calmly as though she had had them for months. He and Cynthia laughed and talked together, making fun of Shirley because she seemed so youthful; and their jests colored

her cheeks until she might in fact have passed for Cynthia's sister to the casual eye.

But when they came to the North Station and found themselves one unit in the throng in the train shed, they were all, except Cynthia, a little hushed and affrighted and ill at ease. Everyone else in this crowd seemed to be upon a familiar footing with the folk whom they encountered. There were shouts of recognition and of greeting passing to and fro as old friends were reunited. Men of every age from that of recent graduates returning to their class reunions up to oldsters twenty years Henry's senior greeted each other by familiar appellations and stood with clasped hands in friendly interchanges from which Henry could not but feel excluded. He and his drew a little apart while they waited for the train to be ready, and stood there in a hushed and startled group, only Cynthia able to support the burden of conversation. She perceived that there was something wrong, and indignantly at last demanded:

"What's the matter with you all? Why are you acting like a lot of sticks all of a sudden? What's the matter, mother?"

Henry took his courage in his hands. "Nothing the matter at all, young lady," he assured her. "It's your imagination!"

"You're not saying a word," she told him accusingly.

"Can't hear yourself think for the noise here," he explained. "Besides, I never did like riding on a train."

She looked at him shrewdly, and after a moment slipped her hand through his arm. "Wait till you get your new suit on," she said reassuringly. "It's awfully becoming. You ought always to wear gray."

"You think so?" he asked, and his courage revived. "I don't know; don't you think it's a little young?"

"Of course, if you want to pretend to be old . . ." she retorted.

"Well, I don't want to be ridiculous," he said.

"I think it's wonderful," she assured him. "You really look as young as mother does."

"Now I know you're making fun of me," he told her, but he was pleased just the same.

On the train, they felt a little more secure. There were not so many people in sight as there had been upon the station platform, for now that crowd was distributed throughout the train; but people from other cars kept walking through theirs, discovering old friends here and there, and although Shirley talked cheerfully enough, Henry after a little began

to ache with a curious longing that someone would recognize him and speak to him. Or at least speak to Shirley!

When this did by and by happen, however, he was so startled that for a little he could find no voice at all.

A tall elderly man came along the aisle of the car, scrutinizing the numbers of the seats on either hand, and stopped at last beside them, and looked at Henry, and spoke to him.

"Is this Mr. Beeker?" this man asked, and Henry swallowed hard and said huskily:

"Why yes. Yes, my name's Beeker."

The older man smiled. "I'm Mr. Herrick," he explained. "I think our sons room together."

"Oh!" said Henry, understanding. "Of course, Curt Herrick. Yes, Dan's written about him. Sure, I know all about Curt!"

Mr. Herrick waited for a moment and then looked down at Shirley and bowed a little. "How do you do, Mrs. Beeker," he said, and Henry realized his responsibilities and introduced Mr. Herrick to Cynthia and to Mary.

"Curt asked me to look you up," Mr. Herrick explained. "Dan told him your seat numbers. I believe we're going up in the same automobile from the Junc."

Henry nodded. "Dan said he'd meet us there," he confessed; and he smiled doubtfully. "We're supposed to get to the Junc and put ourselves in Dan's hands from there on."

"Dan and Curt aren't going to be able to get down to meet us," Mr. Herrick explained. "Mrs. Herrick and Celia went up yesterday, and the boys are busy with a luncheon or something of the kind today. But they've arranged to look out for us." Henry looked a little startled at this, and the older man added reassuringly: "I know all about it. There's a taxi reserved for us."

Cynthia said politely: "Won't you take my chair, Mr. Herrick?"

But the older man shook his head. "I just stopped to introduce myself," he explained. "I'm going on to have a smoke. Will you come, Mr. Beeker?"

Henry started to say that he did not smoke; but he was afraid this would sound ungracious, so he rose. "Why yes," he agreed. "Yes, I'll go along;" and the two men went together down the aisle.

When they were settled in the smoking compartment, Henry asked: "You've been up to Hanover before, then?"

"Oh yes," the older man agreed. "Yes, I was in the class of '82."

"Is that so?" Henry echoed, a little abashed as though he had been guilty of a breach of taste. "Oh, of course; Dan's told me that his roommate's father was a Dartmouth man. I've never been up," he confessed, frankly throwing himself on the other man's mercy. "We've wanted to get up, but we haven't been able to before; but of course we wouldn't miss Dan's Commencement."

"He's made a fine record up there," Mr. Herrick remarked. "You have a right to be very proud of him."

"Well," said Henry, "we are!"

"Curt tells me Dan plans to go to law school," the other man suggested, and Henry said:

"Yes. Yes, he's going to Harvard Law next fall."

Mr. Herrick drifted from this talk of their two sons into reminiscence of his own college days. He had, it appeared, kept in close touch with affairs at Hanover since his graduation. "I try to go back once or twice a year," he told Henry. "I think I've known at least a few men in every class since my own, and some before. You'll have a pleasant time there, Mr. Beeker."

Henry found the older man's conversation full of charm and interest, and he was content to listen without interrupting. Mr. Herrick offered him a cigar; and Henry, because he did not know how to refuse, took it and lighted it. But after a few puffs he permitted it to expire between his fingers and did not light it again, and at the end of an appropriate interval he dropped it into the receptacle on the floor. He was content to sit thus indefinitely, but when the other had finished his cigar he rose and said:

"Well, you'll be wanting to get back to your family, Mr. Beeker. I'll look out for you when we get to the Junc."

"I don't want to be any trouble to you," Henry told him, and the other man shook his head.

"Don't worry about that," he replied. "Nobody is ever any trouble at Hanover."

Henry had time during the remainder of the journey to tell Shirley and Mary and Cynthia what had passed between them. Their courage was revived by Mr. Herrick's courtesy, so that the ordeal which for a while they had dreaded assumed less fearful aspects. But when the train stopped at White River Junction and they descended to the station platform it

was to stand in some perplexity until Mr. Herrick came to find them.

"Our machine is right over here," he said. "Here's Mr. Thompson. He'll look out for your bags. Just come along this way."

And a minute later, with an astonishing lack of confusion, they were safely bestowed in the car, Mr. Herrick on the front seat with the driver, Henry on one of the smaller seats in the tonneau with the bags piled beside him, and Shirley and Cynt and Mary behind. They wound through the streets of the ugly little railroad town, and across the river, and swung into the lovely road toward Hanover, taking their place in a line of other cars bound in the same direction. Now and then in passing machines Henry caught glimpses of youthful, laughing faces; and he felt his blood quicken at their quick, clear voices as they greeted acquaintances along the way.

When they came up the hill into Hanover, at Mr. Herrick's direction they stopped before a small white house on the fringe of the village, and Mr. Herrick introduced them to their temporary landlady. Her name was Mrs. Richards, and she and Mary were immediately on friendly terms. They were all very much amused by the fact that Mrs. Richards thought Mary must be Dan's mother, and supposed Shirley and Cynt were both his sisters; and within a few minutes of their establishment in the rooms Dan had reserved for them she and Mary were exchanging experiences.

"If we don't look out," Henry predicted, "Mary will stay and talk to Mrs. Richards all the time she's here!"

They unpacked their bags, and Henry got into his new suit, and Shirley and Cynt united in assuring him that he looked no older than the boys who were continually passing up and down the street outside their windows. But after they had changed their clothes, there was nothing more for them to do for the minute; and they were left, a little lonely, to wait for Dan's coming. He arrived at last, running down the street, bursting into the room, hugging Shirley and Cynt and his father indiscriminately.

"And where's Aunt Mary?" he demanded. "You didn't leave her at home, did you?"

"She's talking to Mrs. Richards," Shirley explained.

"Well get her in here," Dan cried, laughingly. "She didn't come up here to visit with her landlady. Where is she?"

And he went shouting through the house to find her, and fetch her to join them.

"We've got to go up and get you some lunch," he explained. "That's the first thing on the program. I expect you're starved, aren't you? Did you see Mr. Herrick on the train?"

"Oh yes," said Henry. "Yes, he took good care of us."

"I couldn't meet you," Dan explained. "I was going to, but Curt said his father was coming up on that train and could look out for you."

"You don't want to have us on your mind," Henry assured his son. "We don't want to be any bother to you."

"Good Lord!" Dan protested. "You're no bother to me. You know, you're putting on this show. I guess you're entitled to have a hand in it. Of course," he added honestly, "I'll be tied up some of the time, but I'm going to be with you every minute that I can."

"We'll look out for ourselves," Shirley assured him. "Just as soon as we find our way around. After all, this is the biggest part of all your college course for you; and you mustn't feel that we're on your hands."

"You can't get lost in Hanover," he told her laughingly. "This is all there is of it. It's only a block and a half from here to the campus, and if you stand in the middle of the campus, you can see all over town. Come on! Let's go up and find something to eat." He added as they started for the door: "Say, that's some suit you've got, papa! You laid yourself out, didn't you!"

"Your mother insisted on it," Henry said deprecatingly. "I told her nobody'd be looking at me."

"They'll be looking at you now, all right," Dan declared. "You'll be the hit of the show."

"Have you noticed your mother?" Henry protested. "She doesn't look a day over twenty herself."

"Well, mother never did," said Dan loyally. "It's nothing unusual for her to be looking like a queen. But you go around most of the time with ink in your hair."

"Can't have two handsome men in one family," Henry told him jocularly, and Dan grinned and squeezed his father's arm, and the caress, for no particular reason made Henry want to cry, so that for a moment he dared not trust himself to speak.

They found themselves presently plunged into the throng of Commencement guests; and the two or three days that fol-

lowed were so full of stirring experiences that Henry and Shirley moved at times in something like a daze. They met Mrs. Herrick and Celia that afternoon. Celia, it appeared, was just Cynt's age, and at Wellesley; and the two girls formed an alliance on the spot. One result of this was that Henry and Shirley lost Cynt, saw little of her during the days that followed; and when they saw her at all she was arm in arm with Celia, and surrounded or accompanied by groups of Dan's classmates.

Young Curt Herrick paid his respects to them, and Shirley and Mrs. Herrick got along famously together.

"She's just as nice as she can be," Shirley told Henry. "You'd think she wasn't anybody."

"Well, she is," Henry reminded her. "Mr. Herrick is one of the leading lawyers in Boston. He doesn't go into the courts much, but wherever there's any big business being done, they're apt to go to him for advice."

"I don't care," said Shirley. "She's awfully nice."

"Big people are," Henry declared. "I've come in contact with some of them, when I was up on Beacon Hill. I think that's why they're big, probably. They're just as simple as anybody. They don't try to put on any airs."

"There certainly aren't any airs about the Herricks," Shirley agreed.

During their days in Hanover Mr. and Mrs. Herrick were uniformly courteous and kindly in their attitude; but it was necessarily true that Shirley and Henry saw them only occasionally, for Mr. Herrick seemed to know everyone. His friends were forever coming to accost him, to lead him away; and Mrs. Herrick seemed to have as many friends as he.

"They're all like members of a family up here," Henry told Shirley, after their first day, while they were going to bed. "Everybody seems to know everybody else. Does it make you feel that you're out of it?"

"It makes me feel we're in it," Shirley retorted. "It makes me feel that just because Dan came here to college everybody knows us, too. We're in the family now." And she added thoughtfully: "I think this is a wonderful college."

"You bet it is," Henry assured her. "That's the way it strikes me, too."

After that first day they had no longer any sense of strangeness, but wandered about the campus, made and renewed

acquaintances, inspected the buildings, watched the hilarious activities of the reuniting classes, and had now and then brief sweet minutes with Dan when he came breathlessly to look out for them, to make sure that they were having a good time, that they were seeing all there was to see. They heard the baccalaureate sermon and were profoundly moved by it, so that Henry said afterward:

"We've kind of got out of the habit of going to church, Shirley. I think we ought to take it up again. I don't think I've heard a sermon for three or four years."

"You're always so tired on Sunday," she reminded him. "I think it does you more good to relax at home; and there's no preacher who can tell you anything about how to live, my dear."

"Just the same," Henry insisted seriously, "I think we ought to start going again. It's a duty to the community, in a way."

Shirley did not argue with him. She was too wise to do so, too willing, if his intention persisted, to yield to his desires.

Class Day was for them the climax of the Commencement season; for Dan delivered the Address to the Old Pine. They had already heard it, for Shirley had insisted on his saying it over for them at one of their brief moments together; and Dan laughingly humored her. This was, as it proved, fortunate; for when the great moment came their perceptions were not clear. Their blood pounded with such shouting pride that their ears rang with its beat; and their eyes were filled with happy tears. In the throng on the hill at the foot of the Tower, they might have been crowded into the background; for they made no assertive attempt to gain places near where Dan would stand. But Mr. Herrick sought them out and brought them to a favorable spot; and Henry, when his eyes cleared, saw his son's bright countenance, a little pale, and heard Dan's ringing tones, and trembled and swallowed desperately hard. Afterward Mr. Herrick got one of the long-stemmed churchwardens for him to keep as a memento; and while they came down the hill together, he said judicially:

"Dan did well, Mr. Beeker! He speaks very well indeed!"

Henry, too proud for hypocritical humility, said frankly: "Well, it sounded fine to me!"

In the long line of black-gowned seniors Dan, because of his height, was toward the van; and when Shirley and Henry were presently together again, Henry said triumphantly:

"You see, it's already given him an advantage because he's not little the way I am. That's one thing I'm mighty glad of—that Dan's tall."

"There are other things about him," Shirley replied smilingly, "which seem to me a good deal more important than his height, Henry."

"Oh, of course," Henry agreed. "Dan's fine in other ways. But just the same, a little man is under a handicap."

They heard the actual Commencement exercises in a mood of awe, and they listened to the addresses by the six leading scholars of the class in an abashed amazement. Henry said afterwards:

"Gorry! Do you suppose Dan knows as much as they seem to?" And Shirley laughed at him.

"No one knows as much as they seem to!" she replied. "They don't realize it, but they're more ignorant right now than they'll ever be again."

"I suppose that's true," he agreed, not fully understanding yet wishing to appear to. "I don't suppose anyone can know anything about life until they get out into the world."

"I'm glad Dan wasn't one of them," Shirley commented. "He's not very strong, and he'd have had to study too hard to lead his class the way they did. I'd rather have him do not quite so well and be as healthy as he is."

"Sure," said Henry. "It doesn't matter so much what his grades are. It's what he carries away with him."

One thing which Dan carried away with him—his diploma—was now in their hands. When after the graduation exercises the double line of seniors marched out of Webster Hall, Henry and Shirley were in the front rank of spectators a little beyond the door, and Dan saw them there and handed his diploma to his father. When they were back in their rooms, Henry and Shirley opened it and looked at it, puzzling over the Latin phrases, sure of none of them, sure only that the document bore the name of their son.

"It doesn't look like much," Henry said. "But it's what it stands for, isn't it?"

And Shirley answered thoughtfully: "It isn't much. I'd a great deal rather look at Dan. You can see so much more clearly in him what he's got from college."

They went back to Boston that afternoon.

"I'll have to stay a day or two," Dan explained. "To get my stuff together here. To get cleaned up. But I'll be home before long."

He took them to the Junction and put them on the train; and when the train began to move they all sat for a little while silent, relaxed and somewhat weary. Henry said at last, smilingly, to his daughter:

"Well Cynt, we didn't see much of you. Did you have a good time?"

"Not particularly," she told them.

"You seemed to," Henry insisted. "I never saw you that you weren't laughing."

"Oh, you have to laugh at these boys," Cynt confessed. "They're amusing. But they're so young!"

Henry chuckled. "Did you tell them so?" he asked.

"Some of them," she confessed. "I thought they needed telling." And she added more seriously: "They're so immature compared to Thad!"

"Oh you and your Thad!" said Henry, and Cynthia's eyes clouded with tender dreams.

"Yes, me and my Thad," she agreed.

Henry was silenced by that, and he was for no particular reason curiously afraid. He looked at Shirley, confessed his fears; but Shirley smiled at him reassuringly, so that he forgot them for a little while.

XVIII

Dan worked that summer on the *Tribune*. When he came home a few days after Henry and Shirley returned from Hanover he confessed that his immediate plans were undecided. "I haven't looked much further than Commencement," he explained. "But I've been away from home every summer, and I thought I'd like to be with you folks this year, if I can manage it. Of course, though, I'll have to get something to do."

"It won't do any harm," Henry suggested, "to put in two or three months on the paper. I think you'll find the work pleasant, and you can earn as much there as in any other way. I'll speak to Mr. Pearce if you like."

So the thing was arranged. Pearce remembered what Dan

had written about his experiences as a refugee and was glad to have the young man on his staff, and Dan found the work from the beginning full of interest. He lived, as he had planned, at home. Now that Clem was gone, that apartment of his behind the kitchen seemed perfectly adapted for Dan's uses, and the boy settled himself there. The arrangement was not only pleasing but convenient. He could, if he were out late in the evening, come or go without disturbing his father or mother; so that it was almost as though he had quarters of his own. But he was not often out in the evenings that summer. Most of his friends were away at the shore or in the mountains; and Dan turned to his father and mother with an eager delight at renewing and refreshing his old contacts with them.

Shirley that summer was not so well. She was oppressed by a persistent nervous irritability. She had harrying fancies and distressing dreams, and her strength failed her at surprising moments, so that these months were not so sweet for her as they might otherwise have been. But Henry derived a tremendous amount of pleasure and satisfaction from this close contact with his son. He was impressed not only with Dan's actual tangible education, but also with his sophistication.

Dan was in so many ways more mature than his father. Henry, in spite of the fact that he had been for almost forty years in daily contact with the world, had yet been sheltered and protected too. His assignments on the paper had not carried him into any wide and varied fields; and there was about him even now, in many respects, a curious and almost boyish innocence. But Dan, through his contacts in college, had come in touch at first or second hand with almost every level of society. His friends had been derived from so many sources that his interests, caught from them, were wide and various. He knew something, for example, about the stock market, which had never attracted Henry's attention at all. He was tremendously interested in current athletics, and except to cheer for his son's college Henry knew nothing of such matters. Dan had acquired a love for music, and a keen and selective taste in reading; and Henry found himself in these matters relatively ignorant and uninformed. The result of his talks with his son was to make Henry immensely proud of Dan; and he used to talk about Dan to Shirley at such length and so fulsomely that she, not quite herself physically, and so less patient than she used to be, now and then exploded in a mild irritation.

Father and son sometimes had long arguments together; arguments which they both enjoyed, and in which in the end Henry always found himself willing to be convinced that Dan was right. Dan had and confessed an interest in politics, which Henry was no longer able to feel.

"I've seen so many campaigns," he pointed out. "Seen candidates come and go. I can't discover that it makes a great deal of difference who's elected, after all."

But Dan's point of view was that it was this very indifference on the part of so many people which made politics relatively ineffectual. He said to Henry one night: "It must have been a wonderful experience for you to be in the State House for so long, in touch with the machine up there; to be able to see the wheels go round."

Henry, with a wistful twinge, smiled and said: "I thought so when I went up there, Dan. In fact I kept on thinking so. I had a good many dreams about it. I used to imagine that I might become one of those writers whose word has weight in the affairs of the state. But in retrospect now I'm not able to see that it amounted to much. There were a few big men there, not many. There aren't many big men, after all, Dan."

Dan asked protestingly: "How about Governor McCall? He's a Dartmouth man"; and Henry chuckled.

"He's a pretty good man," he confessed. "In spite of that! I think he'll be reëlected."

"Did you know Coolidge?" Dan asked curiously.

"No," Henry confessed. "Oh, of course I had some contact with him, but not many people know him. They say he's lucky. I don't know. I've heard him make a speech once or twice, and he always seemed to me to know what he was talking about."

"I've never heard him," Dan said. "But I want to. He's certainly a vote-getter; and there must be something in him. I'd like to see what it is."

In August, Dan had a period of depression at the prospect of putting in three more years of study before he could begin to earn his living; and he confessed this one night to his father.

"Pearce tells me I've made good on the paper," he said. "He'll give me a raise if I'll stay. I'm almost inclined to do it. I think I could go ahead fast in the newspaper game."

Henry sat for a moment chilled and still, with an appalling fear. He spoke at least in a tone carefully persuasive.

"Dan," he said then, "the trouble with you is, you're in a hurry. Young men are always in a hurry! And no doubt you're considering me. But that isn't necessary. I'm able to give you law school. I've been planning on it for years. It's about the dearest thing in life to me now. There's no way in which you can make me any happier than by going on."

"I don't know that I want to be a lawyer," Dan confessed. "It seems to me sometimes that it's a thankless profession. You umpire a fight, and pick up what spills out of the pockets of the fighting men."

Henry smiled. "Have you ever expressed that view to Mr. Herrick?" he inquired.

"No," Dan confessed. "No, I haven't. I don't know that I ever felt that way until lately. Till I got to talking with some of the men in the office."

Henry's countenance colored a little, angrily. "Most of the lawyers who get into the papers," he said, "are the sort to make you distrust the law. That's the newspaper's business, you know, Dan. A newspaper isn't interested in the fine, normal way of life. It's only interested in the freaks, the deformities, the abnormalities; and newspaper men are a cynical lot, anyway. They've seen so many idols smashed that they distrust even those men who are apparently upright and fine."

"I think, sometimes," Dan insisted thoughtfully, "I'd like to be a newspaper man."

Henry shook his head. "I thought so myself, when I was your age. When I was younger, and when I was older, too," he confessed. "I don't suppose there is any profession so well calculated to captivate the imagination of a young man. It lays the world at his feet, seems to offer him all the good things in life.

"But as a matter of fact it doesn't give them, Dan. It just permits him to be a looker on, and a looker on at the uglier aspects of things; a spectator of the plagues that sweep the world.

"Thirty or forty years ago, perhaps, this wasn't true. The newspaper was not so much a scavenger as a director, an educator, a guide. I don't know; that was before my time. That's the impression you get from talking with old timers in the game. Perhaps their opinion has been colored by years. I find myself, looking backward, imagining that the *Tribune* was a good deal more of a paper when I started in there than it is now. I know it seemed to me to offer a

chance for big work, for a fine job; and yet I suppose it must have been just about the same."

He hesitated, added reflectively: "I've seen a lot of good men in the newspaper business, Dan. Men with fine abilities, with tremendous capacities, and men whose ideals in the beginning were high and stern. But they've all had to compromise, sooner or later. They've all had to do rather less, or rather more than they believed they should have done; and they've all had to stifle, smother, kill off their aspirations. Or else face discontented age, and something rather like disgrace at the end."

He added with a rueful gesture: "If they've kept their ambitions, they've been as like as not to end in sanitariums. They're a vulnerable lot, Dan. Their life is hard and strenuous. They're strained to the cracking point all the time, and a touch is enough, sometimes, to end them."

"You're not that way," Dan said rebelliously.

Henry smiled. "I suppose I've learned a certain philosophy," he replied. "I no longer have any illusions about my potentialities. I can handle this copy desk job as long as it may be necessary. That's one thing about the newspaper game. After you've learned it, you can always make a living at it. But if you ask for any more than that, you're going to be disappointed in the end."

Dan said, almost resentfully: "You know what Daniel Webster said about the law."

"What?" said Henry.

Dan quoted: " 'I've given my life to law and to politics. Law is uncertain, and politics is utterly vain.' "

Henry nodded. "I suppose most men feel that way about their own jobs when they grow old," he confessed. "But Dan, there's a dignity about the law. It may be uncertain, but it's a business which engages the highest qualities in a man, unless he chooses tricky and unscrupulous ways. I know you well enough to know you'll avoid them. I hope you'll stick to our plans."

In the end of course Dan did so. He decided, since it would be more economical, to continue to live at home; and he bought at second hand a cheap and decrepit automobile in which to go back and forth between Newton Centre and Cambridge. Henry derived a curious and stimulating satisfaction from Dan's purchase of this car. It was as though the shabby machine testified to Dan's abilities, and offered warranties for his prospective success.

Dan had learned to drive in Hanover. He tried now to teach Henry, but Henry stubbornly refused to have anything to do with the actual operation of Dan's new acquisition.

Cynt was not so reluctant. Within a day or two she could drive as well as Dan, or at least as confidently; and she developed a passionate interest in the car. This began as a zealous desire to make it seemly to the eye. She washed it, she mended a rip in the top, she bought black enamel paint and labored in an effort to make it as shining as it should have been; and when she had done as much as could be done in these directions, she ventured at last to lift the hood and explore its inner workings. There were during that fall occasions enough for this sort of thing, for the car had had hard usage, and it developed a disappointing tendency to subside into a balky silence at inconvenient moments. Dan could drive well enough, but his deficiencies as a mechanic soon became apparent; and Cynt, after she had acquired a suit of overalls which covered her from head to foot, picked the engine to pieces, put it back again, polished and adjusted and annoyed the helpless thing whenever it was available for her attentions.

They had no garage, so that the car when not in use stood at the curb in front of the house; and at such times as it was there, if anyone wanted Cynthia, she was usually to be found either under or within it.

Early in the fall Dan had one day a light cold and a little temperature and stayed at home in bed. The day after, however, his symptoms had disappeared and he returned to his classes; but two or three days later he developed a dragging limp in the right foot, and Shirley, who was the first to remark this, asked him what the matter was. He said quickly:

"Nothing, I guess. I don't notice. It just feels a little numb, perhaps."

Shirley immediately called a doctor. "With so much infantile around," she said, "I'm not going to take any chances."

The slight disability went little further. Dan, the doctor decided, had suffered a mild attack of infantile paralysis; and its effect was apparent in this dragging limp and in the fact that as time went on the calf of his leg was definitely smaller than it should have been. Henry and Shirley, however, were as affrighted by their son's escape as they would have been by an actual catastrophe. They clung to one another, and they murmured over and over, suppose and suppose and suppose, cowering as chickens cower and scuttle to cover when

the shadow of a hawk passes across the henyard. The shadow of the wings of terror had passed across them; but as weeks went by and it became certain that Dan would suffer no further ill effects, their courage began to return.

2

Wilson was reëlected that fall because he had "kept us out of war," and Henry voted for him and supported him in the continual arguments in the office and at home with a zealous enthusiasm. To the criticisms of the other men he had one rejoinder.

"Look at Europe! Look at what's happening over there, and then look at us. I should think you'd be satisfied."

But even before the election it became apparent that the war was drawing nearer. The U-53 paid a polite call at Newport, and the next day sank ships within sight of the American coast. A little later the *Deutschland* made her second successful voyage to this country. In December a war scare swept Wall Street and stocks went tumbling. Cynthia was sure that soon or late the United States must go in. Dan was uncertain. Henry was just as positive on the other side.

"Not with Wilson president," he told them stoutly. "He swore we'd never go into the war as long as he was president, and he'll keep his word."

"He may have to resign," Cynthia retorted. "He can't help himself. He won't be able to help himself if things go on."

In December the Germans made peace proposals, and Henry triumphantly brought home the news. "The war'll be over by spring," he predicted; and the "Peace without Victory" note in January confirmed his impression. But when Germany announced her campaign of ruthless submarine warfare, even Henry's confidence was shaken, and when Wilson went at last to Congress in April, Henry, with a complete change of front, was ready to confess the necessity of doing so.

He and Shirley secretly agreed together that Dan's illness of the preceding fall had been after all a fortunate thing.

"It hasn't done him any real harm," Henry pointed out; "but it will disqualify him if he tries to enlist."

Shirley agreed. "But they may accept him and make him do something else," she suggested fearfully. "Something that doesn't need marching."

Henry shook his head. "They don't take them unless they're in perfect physical condition," he assured her. "I've asked and found out. I know that's true."

Dan came home one night in May curiously still and thoughtful, and confessed to them that he had tried to enlist. "They won't have me," he said. "They won't have me on any footing at all."

Henry said honestly: "I haven't spoken to you about it, Dan. I knew you'd want to try. But you mustn't blame your mother and me if we're glad they won't take you. After all, our lives are pretty well bound up with you and Cynthia, and I don't think we could stand to have you go."

"Well," said Dan regretfully, "I'm not going."

"Was it on account of your foot?" Henry asked.

"That and other things," Dan confessed. "I think they might have taken me, as far as that is concerned; but they decided I've got a bad pair of lungs besides. Of course I've always had to be careful, but I thought they were all right."

"They are all right," Henry insisted. "They have no right to say anything like that to you. We've had you looked over, Dan. You don't ever need to worry about your lungs."

"That's what they said," Dan agreed. "But they said the army life would probably hit me there, and make trouble for me right away."

It did not occur to any of them that, even though Dan was to be permitted to stay at home, the war might strike them from another side. Their attention during these first weeks was all turned outward, away from themselves, following the flooding dispatches in the columns of the *Tribune*, doing their part in the multitudinous activities which now sprang into life. Henry once or twice remarked to Shirley that Cynthia was silent and abstracted, but Shirley said reassuringly.

"It's nothing. She's often quiet that way."

So they were all unprepared to oppose her when Cynthia one night announced that she was going to England to drive an ambulance there; and their first haphazard protests found her rigidly ready to silence them.

"I haven't said anything to you about it," she explained, "because I knew it would make you unhappy and worried, and I wanted to be perfectly sure, first. But I've made all my arrangements, and Thad has taken care of it in England, and I'm sailing in four days."

After their moment of paralyzed silence and dismay, she added, smiling at them wistfully:

"Please don't argue about it. Because I really know what I want to do, and I've made up my mind, and I've promised."

Shirley, torn by her grief and fears, and not in her normal health and spirits, could not present in this emergency the composed and philosophic countenance which she might have wished to show. In a state approaching hysteria she collapsed and went to bed, and Henry and Mary had to tend her hourly for two or three days.

Cynthia saw her mother only once or twice, fighting for self-control against Shirley's fearful and futile appeals. It was almost a relief to all of them when upon the appointed day Cynt sailed for England; for once her daughter was gone, Shirley immediately attained some measure of composure, and although she was quiet and still, she was able to be about the house again.

They heard three weeks later of Cynt's safe arrival on the other side, and breathed more easily in the knowledge that that perilous passage was done.

XIX

They lived during the succeeding months in the columns of the newspapers and in Cynthia's letters, rare hurried scrawls written at odd minutes in the intervals of her busy days.

After her departure, Dan's automobile refused to function, as though it missed her healing hand; and it seemed wiser for Dan to live in Cambridge. The expenses would be a little more, but on the other hand the journey from Newton Centre by train and subway was a severe tax upon his strength and time. So he was at home only for the week ends. During the previous winter they had seen something of Curt Herrick, for Curt and Dan liked to work together, and Curt was apt to drive over in the evening to spend two or three hours in Dan's room behind the kitchen, and sometimes Cynt and Celia made a fouresome with Dan and Curt at the theatre.

But now that Cynthia was gone and Curt was in a training camp and Dan was living in Cambridge, Henry and Shirley and Mary felt very much alone.

Shirley's depression sometimes returned upon her, and Henry had to devise ways to appease and amuse her; had to forget his own fearful concern for Cynthia in the more immediate problem of his wife's happiness. The food restrictions, in their fashion, helped him. The necessity of getting along on less sugar and less flour provided difficulties at first annoying and later amusing. Shirley herself pointed out one day that the war food regime was good for Henry.

"Your trousers are too big for you at the belt," she assured him. "I ought to have put you on a diet long ago!"

And Henry agreed: "That's right, and I'm feeling better, too."

The coal shortage was not so salutary in its effects. There were times when they were afraid it would be necessary to let the furnace go out, to close the house, to go to live in an apartment in town; but always at the last possible moment a little more coal was delivered to carry them through.

They followed the war news with a keen and personal interest, and particularly the accounts of air raids over England; and after each one, they waited with an anxiety which they sought to conceal from one another for word from Cynthia to say that she was well, that she had escaped this last visitation. The beginning of the Russian revolution chilled them for a while with fear. They pictured the German hordes, freed from this menace in their rear, turning all their strength against the weary lines in France; and they waited that inevitable stroke with apprehensions not far removed from prayer.

When in the following March the German drive began, however, Henry's spirits rose. The reality, terrible though it may have been, was less terrible than he had feared. Shirley could not take this point of view. At each new confession of German success she would cry out to Henry:

"But nothing can stop them, Henry! Nothing! They're going to end it before our men get over there."

"Don't you believe it," Henry assured her. "They're losing thousands of men, and they're not gaining anything but a lot of ground that's no good except to fight over. You wait. Our men will begin to take a hand pretty soon; and when they do, Shirley, there'll be a different story to tell."

With Château Thierry and Belleau Wood, his hour of tri-

umph began; and he carried his head ever higher as the slow turn of events swung like a pendulum in the direction of their hopes. He took an almost proprietary interest in the mounting Allied victories, so that Shirley, her fears now somewhat relieved, used to laugh at him and say:

"Henry, you act as though you had a regiment of sons over there, instead of just one little daughter driving an ambulance."

"That's all right," he retorted. "I'll bet Cynthia's done her share. Look at the way things are going, since she went over!"

He was willing to be absurd if he could move Shirley to laughter, for her spirits had been heavy for so long.

The false armistice and then the true one gave him no particular feeling of elation. They had been discounted for weeks. But afterward he suffered some reaction, a certain depression. The exhilaration of the conflict was done. There must remain now the long convalescence.

"It's going to be pretty tough, living in this world, for a good many years," he told Shirley. "High taxes and high prices. Tough on us low salaried men."

But Shirley smiled at him. "At least," she reminded Henry, "Cynthia will be coming home."

2

Cynt's letters, irregular and sometimes all too scanty, had nevertheless been during these months like the breath of life to them. She wrote whenever she could, a few lines at odd moments now and then; and what she wrote served to give them a picture of the work which she was doing.

"I'm waiting," she would scrawl, "for a shipload of wounded to dock. The ship is warping in now." And a few lines more, and then: "Here come the stretchers. I'll have to stop." Or: "It's quarter past two in the morning and we're all down cellar. There are Zeppelins somewhere around. I'd go out and see the fun, but the noise is simply deafening." And she described the others huddled there with her and told how some of them were gay, and how some of them were pale with fear, and how some, though they might laugh at their own terrors, nevertheless shuddered and sat with chattering teeth until it was quiet once more.

Or she would write at more ease, describing one of the hospitals at some great country place; or she would send them a letter from Thad telling of his work at the dressing

stations near the line. In August after her arrival in England, Thad got leave for a week end; and they were together, and though her letter was as noncommittal as might be, Shirley insisted that she could read between the lines all that was in Cynthia's heart when she wrote.

The following February, when Thad got leave again, Cynthia wrote more frankly.

"I don't know how long it's going on," she said. "Thad says it may not be long now. But as soon as it's done we're going to be married, Thad and I. You won't mind, mother and father, if we don't wait till we get home? We've already waited for so long."

Henry stormed at this. "Of course we mind," he protested. "I'm going to write and tell her so. There's no such hurry as all that. Let her wait till she gets back here, and Thad too. I guess I can give my daughter a wedding. As long as I've only got one to give."

But Shirley would not let him write as he wished to. "It won't do a bit of good, Henry," she assured him. "Cynthia may promise, but she won't be able to keep her promise; and after all, you haven't any right to ask her. She's been pretty patient with us, don't you think? And she's wanted Thad so long. You'll only make her go against you. Only make her unhappy without doing any good."

So in the end they wrote to Cynthia that she must do as she thought wise. "Of course," Henry told his daughter, "we'd rather have you come home and be married here. It's going to be tough enough for me to have you getting married at all. But I guess you know that. I don't feel as though I knew Thad very well. I haven't seen as much of him as I'd like to. But he must be all right, or you wouldn't want to marry him. That isn't what's worrying me. I guess it's just that I'd like to see my little girl again."

Cynthia wrote back to that: "Don't be silly! I'll still be your little girl."

But though when they read this letter aloud neither of them commented upon this assurance, they both recognized the fact that it would not be true.

Thad and Cynt were married in London, two weeks after the armistice. Henry and Shirley had a cable signed by them both; and a fortnight later another cable from Thad informed them that Cynthia was coming home, would arrive in January. They could not come back together because Thad would not be discharged from the service until his arrival on

this side; and his transportation was a financial item not to be ignored in their plans.

So Cynthia came home to them before her husband, and her steamer would dock in East Boston. On the ferry as they crossed to meet her, Henry said to Shirley:

"After all; it's going to be just as if she had come home to be married over here. Her coming alone this way."

Shirley made no comment, but she smiled at his ignorance; and a little later on, when they picked Cynthia out of the throng of disembarking passengers, Henry knew at first glimpse of his daughter's countenance why Shirley thus had smiled.

He held Cynt close, but he could find in that first moment no words for her. Only later, while they were going home together, was he able to take part in their conversation. Shirley and Cynt both talked at once and constantly, and Henry spoke when he could. But when he spoke, though Cynthia patted his hand reassuringly and comfortingly, they paid no heed to him. He was able to perceive that mother and daughter were from this time forward in an alliance which he could not wholly share.

At home, through the long evening, he was content to sit and watch Cynt and listen to all she had to tell them, and he was very tired when at last they went upstairs and he and Shirley were alone. Shirley, a peaceful contentment in her countenance, was undressed and in bed before Henry had well begun to remove his garments. Neither of them spoke for a while, and when they did it was of matters on the skirts of that which was foremost in their minds. Shirley said:

"She's looking well, isn't she?" And Henry heartily retorted:

"Yes! Yes, it's been good for her." And he added smilingly: "I'm dizzy, trying to listen to you two."

"She has so much to tell," Shirley agreed. "I don't suppose we'll ever get caught up with talking!"

"You'll have to work fast," Henry assented, "to get it all in before Thad gets home. After he gets here, she'll have mighty little time for us."

Shirley smiled. "There'll be times when she'll need us," she assured him. "When she'll be mighty glad to have her mother around."

Henry was conscious of a grave embarrassment. He said after a time, in an apparently disconnected fashion: "If our baby had lived, she'd be twenty now."

Shirley nodded. "But she's always been a baby to me," she told him, after a moment. "It's been nice having a baby always."

"Yes sir," said Henry vigorously. "Yes sir. There's nothing like having a baby under foot in the house."

And Shirley looked at him and smiled. "You don't look old enough to be a grandfather," she told him happily.

PART V

THE MAN

I

A boy may grow larger till he wears the aspect of a man; but a man does not fully come to manhood until he learns how to release the boy who still dwells within himself. Henry was on the threshold of this discovery. In a few months now, he would be fifty years old, and he would be a grandfather; and at the prospect he felt a curious and springing youth in his veins.

Boys reach forward to grasp maturity, adopting in their later adolescence the severe dignity and the grave demeanor which seems to them the guise of manhood. Most boys pass through the phase of wishing to grow mustaches; and this does not always end with their attainment to the status of a voter. Men whose appearance is persistently youthful wear hirsute adornments so that they may seem older than their years; and there is nothing more pleasing to a man in his twenties than to be told he looks ten years older than he is. Not until a man becomes conscious that youth is in fact receding behind him does he begin to ape its graces and imitate its ways.

Henry had sacrified his boyhood, as much from choice as from necessity, to his professional apprenticeship; and save for an occasional forgetful hour with Dan while Dan was still a baby, he had seldom tasted the savor of foolish play. He had been too much burdened with responsibilities to be young; and at the same time too young to be mature. When he might have wished to be idle and irresponsible, he had been compelled to recognize and accept responsibilities; and once accepted, they had bound him fast. But now his years of responsibility were almost done. . . .

He had expected from life the opportunity to do great things in great ways; but he was to perceive that his years of doing were finished, that hereafter it were folly for him to aspire. Once it had seemed to him that his path lay toward the heights; and always he had kept his eyes fixed on some goal, abandoning it only when it was so near that it held no further glamour. Or when it receded too remotely.

But those heights to which he had not in fact attained, he still had scanned at close range of vision; and familiarity robbed them of mystery and all allurement. He had longed, during his more youthful years, for labor and struggle and for conquest; but he began now to be contented with security.

He had never had an adventure in his life; never a moment upon which he could look back and say: "That was a narrow escape!" Or: "That was a turning point!" Or: "That changed the whole current of my days." For his life, it seemed to him, had been predestined from the first. He had never done less than the best that he could do; but on the other hand, his best was never much better than his worst.

He had had sorrows, to which he could not surrender because for the sake of those about him he must keep a cheerful countenance; he had had temptations to which he could not succumb because to do so would pain those who depended on his constancy. There had never been a time when he could be what he chose, or do what he chose; for always he was bound by the web of his life. He had learned to hide his irritation because it saddened Shirley; he had learned to control his angers because they alienated Dan and Cynt; he had learned to stifle his sorrows so that he might comfort other sorrowing ones; and he had learned that there was in the end no part for him but surrender still.

He had read some books, but fitfully; read with a keen and eager appetite which died for lack of feeding, which was revived again by casual chance, and died again as readily. He had liked people without ever having an abiding friendship; for those who had been his friends had fallen behind, or strayed away, or gone ahead of him. People had liked him—and forgotten him when he was out of view. He had served a succession of ambitions, and sometimes attained them, and sometimes failed of attainment; and they were hollow when he won, and not long regretted when they escaped his grasp.

He had, in a word, taken himself seriously; but the world, made up of men like himself, had refused to share his view of the matter; and Henry was beginning to perceive, with a great sense of peace, that the world in this was right, and he was wrong.

II

President Wilson landed in Boston in February, returning from taking his part in the peace negotiations; and everyone in the city was interested in the great event except Henry and Shirley and Cynthia. They were busy seeking out an apartment for Thad and Cynthia to occupy; for Thad was coming home in March. Henry could take little actual part in the search which went forward, and even Cynthia was not always fit for it. But Shirley, and sometimes Mary, went looking here and there, collecting rents and descriptions and accumulating a fund of information looking toward the ultimate decision. It was Shirley more than either of the others who was the driving force in this search.

"I can't do anything without asking Thad, anyway," Cynthia pointed out to her mother. "So I don't see why we need to be in such a hurry now."

But Shirley said: "My dear, you must recognize that Thad will expect you to decide things like this. The home is your affair. You're going to be at home all day, while he's away; and it's much more important that you should be pleased with it than that it should satisfy him."

"I know," Cynthia argued. "But we're not going to have very much money, and we've got to consider that; and we've got to plan to have a place near where Thad's work is going to be."

"It won't do any harm," Shirley repeated, "to find out as much as we can before he comes."

They had, a little before Thad's arrival, a letter from him with word that his immediate future was decided. "I'm going to assist Doctor Cornet," he wrote. "I met him while I was in Boston, before I came abroad; and I've seen him over here three or four times. He's a mighty able man and he's going to come along fast, and if I'm up to the job it'll be a great chance for me. It probably means, too, that I'll be appointed on the staff at the City right away, so we'll want to have some place to live that's handy to his office, and the Deaconess, and the

Baptist, and the City. Find something near there if you can."

When he landed, early in March, Cynt was so glad to see him that she had no immediate desire to tell him the result of their researches; but Shirley was more businesslike in her attitude.

"We found just the place, Thad," she said. "And it's only necessary for you to see it, and to make the arrangements with the landlady. It's near the Deaconess, and it's just the right size for you. An apartment on the third floor with two bed rooms."

Thad grinned good humoredly. "I guess we're not going to need two bed rooms," he suggested. "Cynt and I haven't seen each other for over three months now."

"You will in the fall," Shirley reminded him. "And you might as well plan ahead, because you'll probably live wherever you settle now for a year or two at least. It's a waste of time and money to keep moving unless you have to. Henry and I never moved but once. So many people move every year or two, but it just keeps them stirred up all the time, and they never feel at home anywhere. I hope you and Cynt can settle down in one place just as soon as possible, so you'll be a part of your neighborhood."

Thad had his arm around Cynthia. "Cynt and I are going to be a neighborhood of our own for a while," he warned them. "You might as well make up your mind to that, mother."

Shirley said, a little hurt in her tone: "I've spent days looking for just the place for you, Thad," and he exclaimed in quick regret:

"Of course you have. I didn't mean to seem unappreciative. We'll go in tomorrow morning and look it over if you say so."

So that was decided.

Later in the afternoon, Thad and Cynt walked over to his father's house. That which had been woodland lying between Henry's home and Beacon Street was by this time assuming a more conventional aspect. King Street had been cut almost all the way through, and there were four new houses on its length beyond where theirs was located. The whole locality was full of these new houses, and when Thad and Cynt came back to dinner, Thad spoke of this to Henry.

"You don't realize it, of course," he said. "Because it has been gradual. But I've been away long enough—almost five years—so it's hardly the same place at all to me."

"It's that way all over Newton," Henry assured him. "And all over the other suburbs too, I suppose. There was a big boom for a while, and then prices went down again, and they keep fluctuating. Some of the builders have made a lot of money, and some of them have gone into bankruptcy." He added smilingly: "You'd have been a rich man by now, Thad, if you'd stayed at home and improved your opportunities."

Thad grinned. "I don't feel like a poor man as it is," he retorted, and hugged Cynthia a little closer. His arm, during these hours, lay constantly about her waist, as though it were affixed there; and Cynthia, though she was very quiet, had a smile in her eyes and on her lips that could not be effaced.

They decided on the apartment which Shirley had found. Thad had saved a little money from his pay during the war, and his salary would with some stretching cover their immediate needs. Henry, who liked to think of himself as a practical man, spoke of the financial aspect of their problem to Thad, asked for facts and figures. And Thad with a ready frankness told him all there was to tell.

"That's not much of a margin," Henry pointed out. "And you'll have to run an automobile."

"Yes sir," Thad agreed. "But I think we can get along. And of course, if I can swing this job, there'll be more in it for me later. Doctor Cornet's business is growing all the time, and he seems inclined to be pretty decent to me; and if he does well, I'll share in it."

"Of course," Henry reminiscently confessed, "Shirley and I started out on a good deal less than that. But things weren't so expensive then. We could save, even on my salary. And her father helped us a lot. I'd be glad to do anything I can do for you and Cynt, but Dan isn't through law school yet; and I suppose he'll need help for a while, even after he gets out."

"I know," Thad agreed. "I know how you feel about it. Any time you want to do anything for Cynthia, you're welcome to; but I think you'll find we'll get along."

Henry said in what he tried to make a careless tone: "It isn't the routine expenses anyway, Thad. You know you'll have doctor's bills, by and by."

Thad chuckled. "That's one of the advantages of my profession," he pointed out. "I'll get a trade discount there. I don't have to worry about doctor's bills."

They did have to confront, however, the immediate problem of furnishing the apartment. Henry and Shirley had a few pieces of furniture which they could spare. "Now that

Cynthia's not going to be at home," Shirley pointed out, "we can empty out the big room, and Mary can move into the little room next ours. That will give them a bed and two chairs and a bureau."

"I thought I'd give them a living room table for a wedding present," Henry suggested.

"I'm going to furnish their kitchen—that is, their pots and pans and things," Shirley explained, "out of what father left. We don't need to be quite so careful now, Henry, because Dan will be standing on his own feet pretty soon."

The older folk had thus a great deal of pleasure in the process of getting the new apartment ready for occupancy. Mary and Cynt worked together to make curtains for the windows, but aside from this Cynthia had little part in what went on. She was too much absorbed in Thad to be greatly heedful of the activities of the rest of the world. And when they were at last installed, Shirley said to Henry laughingly:

"I declare, I don't think they know what's happening to them. It's exactly like putting two babies to bed. They're so submissive. Let you do just what you want!"

"Well," said Henry complacently, "I think they're going to be pretty comfortable." And he added with a smile: "Quite a difference from the way we started out, Hon. Of course we had a house, but we never thought of a telephone, or electric lights, or anything of that kind."

"Thad has to have a telephone," Shirley said protestingly. "He's always being called by his patients."

"Oh, I'm not blaming them," Henry assured her. "No, I think it's great that they can be as comfortable as they are." Shirley said nothing for a moment, smiling at her own thought, and he added almost furtively: "I'm going to miss Cynt around the house for a while."

Shirley looked at him then, with a quick understanding; and she crossed and bent to kiss him. "She'll be here a lot, Henry," she reminded him. "And we'll be in there. It isn't as if they'd gone to some other town to live. As they might have done!"

"I know," Henry agreed. "But just the same, Cynthia's gone away for good and all."

They were too deeply absorbed in the fortunes of the new household to be greatly attentive to other matters; but in June two things happened which focussed their attention for a while. Dan finished at law school, and passed his bar examina-

tions, and went into Mr. Herrick's office. He would still live at home in those two rooms behind the kitchen which had once been Clem's; and he proposed to begin paying rent for them, and paying board. But Henry and Shirley would not hear of this.

"You're going to need what little salary you have, for a while, Dan," Henry reminded him. "And your mother and I will want to feel that we're helping, as long as you need us, and even after you no longer need us, too." He added with a smile: "That's one of the things you'll have to make allowance for, Dan. You'll have to let us help you in what ways we can find, even when you don't need the help. We like to think of you still as a little boy, you see."

"I know," Dan agreed, and he smiled in an affectionate way. "I don't think you'll have to criticize me on that account. I'll take all I can get! You'll have to call a halt, sooner or later, or I'll bankrupt you both."

"Of course," Henry suggested, watching his son, "you'll be getting married pretty soon, and then I suppose you'll want to go somewhere else, just as Cynt has."

Dan colored a little, but he shook his head. "That's one thing," he replied, "that needn't worry you for a while. I have to dig my toes in first, before I can think of marrying anyone."

The other incident—it was even in Henry's eyes little more than an incident—which marked the early summer was a change in Henry's work. There had been in the months since the war a steady diminution in the circulation of the *Tribune*, and the promotion department inaugurated a series of contests designed to combat this. One of these competitions involved the publication every day in the paper of a drawing representing the title of some book, with a coupon to be filled out by those who sought to guess the title thus suggested. There were to be prizes for the greatest number of correct answers, and the flood of mail which immediately began to pour into the office put such a burden upon the promotion department that a cry for help was raised.

Mr. Pearce, thus appealed to, cast his eyes about the city room, considering the available men, and his glance lighted upon Henry. The change meant that Henry's desk was removed to another part of the building, and that he spent his days opening letters, discarding incorrect replies, and filing and classifying the correct ones.

He told Shirley of the move, but not till a day or two after it occurred; and when he did so Shirley looked at him doubtfully for a moment, and then said uncertainly:

"It sounds quite interesting, Henry."

"Very amusing," he agreed. She made no further comment, but he added after a moment: "Of course my pay is still the same."

"Oh, of course," said Shirley.

They never mentioned the change again, though for the next few years Henry's work was to remain in this new channel.

2

That which went forward in the world about him was by this time become of little consequence in Henry's life. His interests were all so intently concentrated at home, and in Cynthia's apartment. Even his work at the office did not require him to follow the course of the news. The police strike in September caught for a little his attention, but only because it interested Dan and led to some talk between them. Dan pointed out that the strike had made Governor Coolidge a national figure; but Henry could see no particular importance in this fact.

"I've seen too many men famous for a day," he urged. "They're forgotten when the next sensation comes along."

"I don't know," Dan protested. "This has its elements of drama. It will leave a deeper impression on the public mind than some things do." And he added: "It's all a part of the Coolidge luck, it seems to me."

Henry smiled. "David Pell used to talk that way about Roosevelt," he commented. "I remember hearing him, back in ninety-eight and -nine. He had a theory that there's a star in the lives of some men, which looks out for them. I know there's an effort to build up some such legend about Coolidge."

"He's got something," Dan insisted. "Or he couldn't win votes the way he does."

"He has sound New England common sense," Henry agreed. "And a devotion to duty. But those qualities aren't sufficiently spectacular to catch the national eye."

"I know," Dan agreed. "They're a great deal more important than this police strike business. But people are going to

forget them and remember the strike. You'll see if I'm not right, by and by."

One reason why Henry could not be greatly interested in this discussion lay in the fact that his thoughts were at this time wholly concentrated in another direction. Cynthia's baby was to be born in October, and Henry sometimes had on her account those same unreasoning yet poignant fears which he had once felt for Shirley's sake. Yet as it had been with Shirley, so now he had to conceal his terrors from everyone. He could not even confide them to Shirley, for she, with that curious physical sympathy which exists between mother and daughter, and lacking the stimulus to courage which Cynthia had, was almost beside herself. So though he would have preferred to go to her for reassurance, he had instead to reassure her. This had always been Henry's burden, that no matter what his own grief and fear might be, he felt it his part to keep a confident countenance and present a brave face to the world for Shirley's sake.

Even Thad, Henry perceived, was terrified at what lay before him. He did not confess this. He talked carelessly about it, pointed out that babies were being born every day, and that in most cases the affair was completely normal and commonplace. "Not one in a thousand," he insisted, "that's even interesting from the scientific point of view."

But Henry could not resist pointing out, with a faint malice: "We're not looking at this, Thad, from the scientific point of view."

"Why not?" Thad insisted. "After all, that's all it is."

"You doctors make me smile," Henry told him. "You like to talk bravely; but you can't fool me, son. You're scared as I ever was, and I'm going to tell you I was pretty scared."

"Never had any reason to be, did you?" Thad retorted, and Henry's eyes clouded for a moment, thoughtfully, before he replied. He felt in a swift rebellion that it was time Thad assumed the obligations of paternity, that it was Thad's turn now to learn the difficult business of hiding his fears from all the world; and he had a momentary resentment at the other's attitude, a momentary determination that Thad should for once in his life know the still clutch of terror.

"Yes," he said. "Reason enough to be afraid. And sometimes you know, Thad, fears come true. Cynthia's very like her mother."

Thad grinned, but he wiped his forehead, suddenly moist and glistening. "Trying to scare me?" he suggested, and he

wore for a moment an aspect so youthful and so terror-stricken that Henry had pity on him.

"No! Oh, no!" he said. "You'll have to make allowance for the pessimism of age, Thad. Cynt's going to be all right. She's sure to be."

Cynt was in fact all right, when her time did come; and the fact that her baby was born three days before it was expected relieved them from the last agony of waiting. It was born in the night, and Shirley and Henry had no warning, slept soundly enough, and were roused at a little after seven by Thad's telephone call of annunciation.

"A boy," he said. "Eight pounds, three ounces. And his name is Henry."

It was Henry who had answered the telephone; and at this he could only say gruffly: "Oh, all right! All right! That's fine."

But Shirley had come hurrying to his side; and when he returned the receiver to its hook she caught his arm, full of questionings. He had, absurdly, some difficulty in answering her; and she and Mary laughed at him tenderly enough, yet unrestrained too.

"You men!" Shirley cried. "You pretend to be so brave and confident! You're really a lot more frightened than women ever are."

"That didn't bother me," Henry protested. "But dog-gone it, they've named it after me!"

"Well, why shouldn't they?" Shirley cried. "I think it's a very proper thing for them to do."

"Gorry," said Henry. "I don't know why anybody'd want to pin my name on a helpless young one!"

But he was to forget these scruples very quickly; and when after his day's work was done he stopped at the hospital to see Cynthia and the baby, he took the swaddled bundle in his arms and said cheerfully:

"Well, Hank, old kid, how do you like it as far as you've gone?"

The nurse, in not wholly affected resentment, caught the baby away from him and cried:

"Now if you're going to call it Hank, I'll not let you hold it any longer!"

Henry laughed; but he did not protest when she took the baby away from him. He was in fact almost relieved. It was a long time since he had held a baby in his arms. He had forgotten how small and soft they were.

III

There were hours when Henry, perceiving the accelerating pace of the years, was filled with vague and formless terror; but for the most part his life ran contentedly. There was nothing in it to give him at this time any great concern. Cynthia was well, and the baby was well, and Thad had already sufficiently demonstrated his abilities so that their circumstances were easier and Cynthia's future was in great degree assured.

"That's all I want for her now," he confessed one night to Shirley. "To know that she's settled, and happy, and nothing to worry about except the ordinary business of living." And he added thoughtfully: "You and I have gone through quite a lot together, Hon. I hope it won't be quite so tough for Cynthia, ever."

"We've come out pretty well," Shirley reminded him. "I don't think I'd ask anything more for Cynthia than we've had."

"I don't know," Henry confessed. "She's off to a better start. I hope she and Thad can go on the way they've begun."

He was somewhat concerned about Dan. Not that Dan gave him any reason for concern, but rather because it seemed to him, and sometimes to Shirley, too, that their son was in small ways escaping from them. He was more often than not away from home in the evening. He had activities and contacts in which they did not hold nor could hold any part, and he moved in ways remote from their experience. In spite of their best efforts to understand and be reassured, they feared those things which were strange to them; and they held and sometimes confessed to one another misgivings hard to overcome. Henry learned an increasing respect and deference for his son. Learned to defer to Dan in matters of opinion as well as in those of fact. Dan was become an ardent Coolidge man, and when in June of the following year Coolidge was named for the second place on the ticket at Chicago, Dan said soberly to his father:

"I shouldn't want to be in Harding's shoes." And Henry, his thoughts harking back, agreed.

"I remember Dave Pell's saying something like that about McKinley," he confessed. "You'd better keep still about it, Dan." He added laughingly: "If anything does happen to Harding, someone may claim you had a share in it!"

"I'll tell you," Dan insisted. "The stars in their courses are fighting for Coolidge. You'll see, in the next four years." He added curiously: "You often speak of David Pell, father. Where is he now?"

Henry shook his head. "I don't know," he confessed. And he added after a moment: "You know, Dan, he and Sam Russell are my oldest friends. I haven't seen Sam for goodness knows how long—maybe twenty years. But when we were boys we were always together." He hesitated for a moment, then said whimsically: "We used to plan to do a lot of things together when we grew up; but Sam's father moved to the country, and Sam married and took to farming, and my life never ran that way. The last time I saw him, he looked like an old man, and his wife was a hopeless drudge in the kitchen."

Dan nodded his assent. "I know how it is," he agreed. "Fellows I knew in college whom I see nowadays have already changed. Some of them have grown bald in three years, and I see a man—and it seems to me I saw him only yesterday—and he tells me that he's married, and got a baby or two. It's funny how quick babies come, when you lose sight of people for a few years."

"The years beginning to go quicker for you, are they, Dan?" Henry asked, and Dan said:

"Yes. Yes, I can still remember when a year seemed like a long time, but now it's pretty short. Nowhere near long enough for the things you want to do." He harked back to his original question. "When did you hear from David Pell?" he asked.

"The last I knew," Henry said, "he went abroad on the Ford Peace Ship, and I think he had a roving assignment for a while after that, in Europe. He wrote two or three novels, when he was a young man. Did pretty well. I thought he'd be a great writer some day; but he got married and it changed him. You could see the change in him, the next time I saw him after that. I'm afraid he didn't get the right woman."

He looked at Dan thoughtfully and added: "That makes a lot of difference in a man's life sometimes—what sort of

woman he marries. I'm glad you're not married yet, Dan. A wife can be a handicap, if your income is small, unless she's the right kind. And you're old enough to realize that there's something more to marriage than just finding a woman you want to hold in your arms."

"I know," Dan agreed, but he seemed unwilling to talk about himself and asked another question. "I dropped in at the *Tribune* office the other afternoon," he said. "To pick you up on the way home. But you'd already gone. A lot of new faces there, aren't there?"

Henry smiled. "I haven't been in the city room myself for a month or so," he confessed. "I have no occasion to go up there now. But there are changes, yes."

"I see Ben Harris is still Sunday editor," Dan commented. "And I saw Charlie Niblo. What's he doing now?"

"Poor old Charlie," Henry replied. "He's still a reporter, chasing pictures, covering fires, handling detail stuff. Just a leg man, nothing more. It's pretty tough on a man his age. He must be sixty-five or past."

"He doesn't look it," Dan suggested.

"No, he doesn't look much older than he did when I went to work there," Henry confessed. "Unless you get close enough to see how thin his hair is. It was always a pale yellow. It's gray now, and the difference isn't great."

He added thoughtfully: "I've seen a lot of the old timers go, there. I'm getting to be an old timer myself now. There are youngsters coming in every year, and some of them stick it out and make good, and others go into the discard."

He hesitated. "I sometimes think they're the lucky ones," he confessed. "It's a tough game, Dan. A tempting game. After you learn your way around, you can always make a living at it, and the result is that a man will stick to it sometimes, because he can hold his job, when it might be a lot better for him to get out and rustle around."

"I remember you told me that once before," Dan agreed. "I'm glad you got me out of there." He added: "But when I was in there the other day, Charlie Niblo was in the reference department, clipping papers."

"That so?" Henry echoed. "Wasn't Miss Martin there?"

"Didn't see her," Dan replied.

"She may be gone," Henry asserted. "I don't know. I'll find out. I wonder if they have put Charlie in there." He smiled a little. "Charlie's had two or three chances. He was up on the Hill for a while, but he couldn't swing that. Never

seems to be able to do anything but just leg work." He added again: "I suppose it's a good game for a man like Charlie, who has one job he can do. When you get to be my age, Dan, you like to feel secure in your job. It's reassuring to know that I can always make a living at it."

Dan said diffidently: "I guess you won't have to, always."

Henry smiled. "Well I'll probably stick to it," he returned. "It gets into your blood."

"I'm getting along pretty well," Dan insisted. "I'll be ready to take a load off your hands before very long."

Henry chuckled. "Don't make rash promises, young fellow!" he advised. "You'll find that life has a way of finding a load for your shoulders to bear, as soon as they're ready for the burden."

"You mean getting married?" Dan agreed, and laughed. "I guess there's no prospect of that. I'm not much inclined that way."

Henry looked at him acutely. "Protesting a little too much, aren't you, Dan?"

"No," said Dan seriously. "No, I mean it. I never saw but one girl that meant anything to me, and there's no chance for me there."

Henry considered, afterward, whether to repeat this remark to Shirley. He knew that she was, during these years, constantly attentive to Dan's every movement and his every word, full of an unconfessed solicitude, forever wondering when and from what quarter this wife he would some day choose was to come. If he told her what Dan had said, Henry decided, it would only worry and distress her. She might even harass the boy with questions; and Dan, Henry guessed, might already have regretted his momentary confidence and wished he had not spoken. As well to keep this matter inviolate between them.

In October, when young Henry Gore was two years old, they had a birthday party in his honor; and Shirley and Henry and Mary and Dan gathered in the little apartment to watch the baby's babbling wonder at the candles on his cake. After Cynthia had put him safe to bed, the rest of them had supper and spent the evening together; and when they went home that night Shirley told Henry that Cynthia was to have another baby.

He said, unable to control his swift misgivings: "That so? Think they can afford it, Hon?" And Shirley nodded proudly.

"Thad's getting twice as much this year as he did last," she

told him. "And Cynthia says the way the work is coming, it will double next year again. Thad's going to be a great surgeon in a few years, Henry."

"He ought not to be hampered by too many children for a while," Henry protested, and Shirley asked quizzically:

"Did children hamper you?"

"Gorry, no," he assured her. "But I had you!"

"Well," said Shirley in a matter of fact tone. "Thad has Cynthia."

They were silent for a while, and then Henry said: "I'm glad Dan's not married. He needs all his time for his profession for a while."

Shirley hesitated for a moment. "He's doing very well," she told him, and Henry asked quickly:

"How do you know?"

"Mrs. Herrick came to call on me the other day," Shirley explained. "You remember, we met her at Dan's commencement. She's such a nice, neighborly person. She came and we had a very pleasant call, and she talked about Dan all the time. Curt's come back now, you know, and gone into the office too. She said Mr. Herrick is tremendously pleased with Dan."

Henry looked at her thoughtfully. "Nice of her to come to see you," he suggested; but if there was a question in his tones Shirley ignored it, only smiled demurely.

"Yes, I appreciated it very much," she said.

Thus they did not confess to one another, then or thereafter, what they began to suspect; but neither of them was wholly surprised when in March of the following year Dan told them that he and Celia Herrick were engaged. They would not, he explained, be married for the present; probaly not for quite a while.

"But she's going to announce it at a dinner, day after tomorrow," he told them. "And I wanted you two to know before."

Henry and Shirley received the information silently, until they perceived his disappointment at their lack of enthusiasm; tried then to reassure him, to express their pleasure and delight. But they were, and they confessed this to one another later when they were alone, a little terrified at the prospect.

"The Herricks aren't our kind," Shirley said. "They live in a different world. I don't know what Mrs. Herrick can be thinking of!"

Henry himself was as disturbed and fearful as she, but he

was not so ready to admit it. "She's thinking Celia's darned lucky," he declared. "And she is, too. I tell you, Shirley, Dan is a husband good enough for any girl. I guess they know it." He added with a mischievous light in his eyes: "The chances are they spotted him years ago, and it's taken them all this time to land him!"

Shirley laughed at that, as he intended she should; but even her laughter was doubtful. "Just the same," she declared, "it worries me a little. I don't think Dan's ready to get married yet awhile."

"He's not going to get married yet," he reminded her. "It may be years."

She shook her head. "Dan's pretty level-headed," she pointed out. "And he wouldn't have gone this far, unless he could see a certainty of going farther pretty soon." She added doubtfully: "Of course Mrs. Herrick was nice to me."

"You ought to go call on her," Henry suggested. "Isn't that the thing to do?"

"I suppose so," Shirley assented. "But I dread it."

Henry laughed at her. "She probably dreaded it just as much before she came to see you," he assured her. "And Shirley, you want to remember how you felt when Cynt was going to be married."

Shirley nodded. "I suppose I'll have to go," she agreed.

IV

Dan's announcement of his engagement awakened in them misgivings which they silenced by the assurance that whatever his marriage might mean to them, at least it would be for Dan's good.

"And I guess we can stand it," Henry said, half laughingly, "if it's going to be better for Dan."

But before very long it became apparent that their fears had been without foundation. Mr. and Mrs. Herrick took the initiative, and persistently, in developing the contacts between the two families. Though Henry and Shirley might be conscious of a difference between them, neither Mr. nor Mrs.

Herrick appeared to perceive anything of the kind; and Shirley, since women are the more adaptable sex, was quicker than Henry to understand this and to accustom herself to it. In her hands Henry found himself swept helplessly yet pleasantly onward. The only distressing aspect of the situation was that Shirley insisted upon his acquiring evening clothes, and it was a long time before he could learn to accept them as of no greater intrinsic importance than his ordinary apparel.

The acquisition would have been forced upon him in the end, even though Shirley had not anticipated its necessity; because Dan's was an evening wedding. When he first confessed to Shirley and his father that he and Celia were to be married, he also told them that this event would not take place for months, perhaps for years; but when he said this it was rather to avoid raising false hopes in his own heart than in any actual effort to deceive his father and mother. He was soberly determined that when she married him it should not be at any sacrifice to herself; but in this opinion Dan was to find himself overruled.

Henry and Shirley were passive listeners to the discussion of the point in question; but both Mr. and Mrs. Herrick agreed in their opposition to a long engagement, and in their feeling that Dan and Celia should be married promptly. Mr. Herrick made light of Dan's financial arguments. He pointed out that Celia had an income of her own, from her grandmother's estate; and he added reassuringly:

"You're no poor man yourself, Dan! And your income is going to keep on growing, for a good many years."

Dan said doubtfully: "I don't want you to feel you have to push me along for Celia's sake, sir." And Mr. Herrick laughed and retorted:

"Don't worry! I'm not sentimental during office hours."

Mrs. Herrick did not even trouble to argue the matter. She calmly and confidently proceeded to plan a June wedding; and she and Celia spent day after day making the necessary purchases and arrangements with that in view.

The event itself was for both Henry and Shirley an experience of a curiously blinding quality. Their own emotions had the effect of confusing their powers of vision to such an extent that when young Curt Herrick came to Shirley's side, immediately after the ceremony, she thought him Dan, and kissed him in a manner which Curt found pleasantly embarrassing. Henry, on his part, had very little to say or to do. He

was content to stand as an attentive spectator, his countenance wreathed in a broad and somewhat fatuous smile of happiness, while he watched what went on.

Afterward, Dan and Celia went away into the Maine woods to a locality familiar to Dan from his experience in the boys' camps there; and Shirley and Henry went home and tried to hide from each other their sense of the emptiness of the house since Dan was gone. Shirley did not fully appreciate this until a few days later she began to clean and order Dan's rooms behind the kitchen, and to pack his things for removal to the apartment in town. Then, quietly alone there, she had her hour of weeping, and emerged from it happier for the relief of tears and reconciled to the fact that her son was now become a man.

2

Dan's apartment, which Shirley and Mrs. Herrick worked together to put in order against the return of the young people, was at the foot of Beacon Hill; and during the months that followed Henry was often there. Dan's marriage had created between father and son a new bond and one which drew them closer than they had ever been before. Henry was able to understand Dan's new perplexities; and though no words on these matters passed between them, he could at appropriate times give his son the sympathy and understanding which Dan during the period of adjustment so sorely needed. They spent, when they could, long hours together. Shirley used to come in town and meet Henry when his work was done, and they would go to the apartment for dinner. They did so once or twice a week, and as often spent an evening with Cynthia and Thad; and Henry learned to find a keen and ardent pleasure in talking with these two sons of his.

Where Thad was concerned, Henry could do little more than listen; but he learned that by offering even the mildest criticism of the professional ethics of the surgeon he was able to provoke Thad to extended and interesting dissertations, while Cynthia and Shirley sat silently by, busy with darning or with needlework. But where Dan was concerned, Henry found a more equal footing. Dan was offered that fall an appointment as assistant attorney general; and at Mr. Herrick's advice he accepted it, for the sake of the experience to be acquired. He served for a year in this capacity before returning

to Mr. Herrick's firm again; and he derived from the experience a keen appreciation of the criminal aspects of the law. His former experience had been largely civil.

He and Henry used to have long discussions of the problem of law enforcement and of what they both considered to be the greater problem of law evasion, and of contempt for the law on the part of those who should respect it. They would talk thus for hours; and afterward, on their homeward way, Henry would repeat to Shirley the argument to which she had been forced to listen silently all evening. She was sometimes completely weary of it; but she never told him so, let him talk on and on. She had learned the futility of being impatient with Henry.

Their lives settled into peaceful ways. A year and a half after Dan was married, Celia's baby was born. Cynthia by this time had her two, both boys, but Celia's was a girl; and they were all robust and healthy infants, their chief preoccupation sleep and victuals. Henry thought them all beautiful beyond the most extravagant praises; and as Cynt's oldest began to reach a suitable age, Henry was learning to play with his namesake. The two of them, on a Sunday afternoon, spent long hours on the floor together, while Henry laboriously built block houses for the baby to knock down, or by the force of pure fancy converted two books piled one upon another into a locomotive, or drew endless pictures of kittens while young Henry watched absorbedly. . . . Shirley, laughing at him one day, said:

"By the time he's a little older, you'll be as young as he is, Henry!"

And Henry chuckled and said: "I don't know. I feel just as young; but my knees get awfully sore, crawling around the floor."

His work in the office was perfunctory; but he had learned to do it with a shut mind. His eight hours there were merely a blank space in his life; he concentrated all the true business of living in that portion of the day which still remained; and his months sped happily.

V

On a certain night a few months after Dan's baby was born —it happened to be in mid-December—Henry was to meet Shirley at Dan's apartment for dinner and the evening; and when he left the office, though there was a thin rain falling, he decided to walk up over the Hill. His overshoes were proof against the wet, and his overcoat was warm; and he went slowly, almost indolently, as though to no intended destination

It was already dark; and beneath the lamps along the paths across the Common hung circles of illumination ringed round with mist from the spattering rain. The electric signs along Boylston Street were golden glows in the sky behind him; and when he crossed Beacon Street he paused for a moment to watch the gleam of the motor lamps upon the wet and oily paving. Their interchanging shafts of white light and gold played like lances through the rain. He crossed at last, at the whistle of a traffic officer; and continued down Beacon Street past Charles and along to the Riverway, turning there. So emerged presently upon the borders of the Basin. And he moved more slowly, his eyes wandering, no haste in his feet at all.

The prospect of the Basin was, it seemed to Henry, very beautiful. The light and misty rain blurred every sharper line. The water, from whose dark surface rose a steady hissing sound, lay girdled by the lights along the two bridges and the embankments, like a circle of yellow jewels. He saw the flashing, intermittent glare of an electric sign at the Cambridge end of the nearer bridge. An indirect illumination revealed, dim in the upper darkness, the stately proportions of the dome of the Technology buildings; and he could see less clearly their gray fronts in sober ranking. A string of lighted windows slid across the bridge as an Elevated train crossed there; and below the bridge he could see gray half-circles surrounding blackness pierced by yellow gleams where lay the arches between the supporting pillars. The whole scene seemed made

of objects misty and intangible; a compound of lights and shadows, and nothing more palpable except the iron railing along the Embankment upon which now he leaned. For he had turned aside to approach the water; and he lingered there, curiously dreading to go on. . . .

Reflections played upon the blurring surface of the rain-pocked river. Behind him in the dark rank of houses along Beacon Street lighted windows here and there peered down at him. A man and a girl, walking together, passed behind him; they were shadowy figures in the darkness, and he heard their murmuring voices, and a word or two as they went by, from the girl. ". . . know you can, dearest," she was saying. And Henry looked after them with still, old eyes.

Once his glance turned to the sky; but the rain struck his face, and he could see no stars.

So at last he must go on to those who waited for him; and he did so, but with lagging feet. Only as he approached the apartment, he forced his step to a quicker beat, and he straightened his shoulders; and when at last, after he had pressed the bell and heard the click of the latch admitting him, he went up the stairs, it was with a youthful stride, and hastening.

Shirley was waiting for him at the door. He called steadily: "Hullo!" And she cried:

"Isn't it a terrible night? Are you wet, dear?"

"Not a bit," he assured her. She hung his overcoat by the radiator, shook his rubbers free of moisture, felt the fabric of his coat to be sure he spoke the truth. "I walked over," he explained. "But that coat doesn't wet through."

"Thad brought me in," she told him. "He's coming to take us home, by and by." Dan came to grip his father's hand; and Shirley, watching Henry, asked: "Are you all right, dear?"

"Fine," he assured her. "Fine! Where's Celia, Dan?"

"Putting the baby to bed," Dan explained.

"Asleep yet?" Henry asked; and Dan grinned.

"Don't think so," he confessed. "Want to go in?"

So the two went on tip-toe to the baby's door; and Celia hushed them with a finger on her lips, and took Henry's arm and led him to bend above the crib. In the darkened room he could only see a shadow on the pillow where the small head lay. Then Celia drew him away again, and they presently sat down to dinner; and Henry and Dan fell a-talking, as they were apt to do, of the currents of the day. Of the disrepute in which men were come to hold the law; and of how they

flouted it; and of what must come of such a course of public conduct. . . .

Shirley and Celia, when they could, withdrew to their own more personal concerns.

But Shirley watched Henry more and more intently; for there was a shadow in his eyes, and though his bearing might deceive these others, her he could not deceive.

Thad and Cynt came, by and by, and they were all together for a little; and then they started for Newton Centre. Henry sat in front with Thad; but his ears were attuned to the tones of Shirley's voice as she talked with Cynt in the seat behind, so that he knew she knew the hurt and pain in him, and had comfort in knowing that she knew.

When they got home, Thad and Cynt did not alight; and Henry and Shirley went in together. Mary was sewing, in the living room. Henry sometimes thought that since the babies began to come tumbling into the world, Mary was younger; as though in these new opportunities of service she found strength and youth again. She spent days at a time with Cynt, or with Celia when there was need of her; and at home here she was forever busy with some needlework for them. She told Henry now that the furnace needed tending; and he went down cellar. Something in his face caught Mary's attention; and she asked Shirley, who was taking off her coat in the hall:

"Is Henry all right?"

Shirley said hesitantly: "He seems—tired."

"More than usual?"

"I guess not," Shirley decided. "I don't know."

She did not finish the sentence; and Mary said no more. But when they were presently all together, these two women who loved him watched Henry with an acute attention, even while they talked lightly of the matters of their day. They watched him, and it became clear to both of them that something was wrong. For all his steady effort to present to them his usual calm and cheerful countenance, there still sat a shadow in his eyes.

Shirley at last approached the matter. "Have a good day, Henry?" she asked.

"Yes, oh yes," he assured her.

"Did you see anyone? Did anything interesting happen?"

He hesitated then, his eyes lowered; but in the end he lifted them and looked at Shirley; and she saw in his glance such a depth of hurt and grief that she was startled, was near

crying out. But he smiled. He smiled, and said carelessly:

"Why, Mr. Pearce shifted me to a new job."

"A new job," Shirley echoed. "What, Henry?"

Henry waited till he could be sure his tone was casual. "I'm to start Monday," he explained. "Take charge of the reference department." He added lamely, in the silence: "Straighten things out there, and so on."

Shirley had not known what it was she had feared; but her relief was so great that for a moment she was sick with it. "Why, isn't that fine!" she cried. "It will bring you back to the news end of the paper. You've wanted that, haven't you?"

Henry smiled. "Charlie Niblo's been in there lately," he said. "Since Miss Martin got married. Pearce says Charlie takes half an hour to find things. He wants me to try to get the place in order."

Shirley hesitated, then asked: "What will become of Charlie?"

"He'll go on the street again," Henry replied. "He's a good leg man; but he can't seem to do anything else."

"So they have to call on you," said Shirley laughingly.

And Henry chuckled at that; but he added, after a little, soberly: "Well, Shirley, that puts me back right where I began. Thirty odd years ago."

Mary had listened without taking any part in the conversation; but she corrected him now. "You started in as an office boy, Henry," she said.

"I know," he agreed. "They always have either an office boy or an old man in the reference. I've had it at both ends of the game. I was an office boy then. Guess I'm an old man, now."

There was a moment's silence; and then Shirley laughed in a soft, reassuring way. "You don't look it, Henry," she told him. "And you didn't act it, with Cynt's babies, last Sunday. I'm afraid you'll never grow up, Henry. You're getting younger lately, all the time."

"I don't feel old," he agreed wistfully. "Only—I'm not so much interested in the work as I used to be. That's the only thing I notice."

Shirley laughed again. "Why Henry, you talk as though this change were a disgrace or something."

"Oh, no," he assured her. "No, it doesn't even mean less pay. I don't suppose I'll ever get any more than my forty-five a week; but I won't have to take less. That's one thing about the newspaper game. They don't reduce salaries. If you're

not worth what you're getting, they fire you, and maybe hire you back in a week or so at less money."

"You're worth a great deal more," Shirley declared.

Henry smiled wisely. "I'm not asking for more," he replied. "You know, when a new man comes along and takes charge, he looks over the big salaries and gets rid of the deadwood. I'd rather be safe and inconspicuous. I'm worth more, but I'll work for what I'm getting. This way, I'm reasonably sure of my job."

He added thoughtfully: "I've done about everything there is to do around the office, from leg work to editing. Copy desk, make-up, anything. They can always use me somewhere. I can write well enough, too. No, I'm not worried about my job."

Shirley sighed with faint relief. "You wore such a long face," she told him reproachfully. "Scared us all to death."

"It's more what it stands for," Henry explained. "You see, I've sort of gone the whole swing of the pendulum. Office boy, reference department, reporter, bicycle editor, copy desk, State House, make-up, copy desk promotion and back to reference again. Makes me feel I haven't got anywhere, just rounded a circle."

Mary said, surprisingly: "People don't get anywhere, Henry. Or if they do, it's always the same place in the end. It isn't where you start for, or where you go; it's how you behave along the road."

Henry and Shirley looked at her thoughtfully. "Of course," Shirley agreed.

Henry chuckled. "Well, I haven't taken any medals along the road," he reminded them.

"You've always been a good man," said Mary contentedly; and Henry, in spite of himself, felt a slow pulse of pleasure at her words. Then Shirley said tenderly:

"Always more like a boy to me!"

"I ought to have outgrown being a boy by now," he suggested.

Shirley shook her head. "Men don't," she told him. "You've always been like a boy. Planning what you were going to do, and then not satisfied when you'd done it, but trying something else."

"Didn't set my goal high enough at the start, I guess," Henry confessed.

"If you hadn't smoked cigarettes, you might have been a

great singer," Mary remarked, but after a moment shook her head. "I guess not, though. I guess I was foolish to ever think so. I guess you've made the most of yourself, Henry, after all."

He hesitated, then laughed a little. "Well," he agreed, "you two ought to know if anyone does. You've had to live with me."

"I've loved it," said Shirley.

He smiled at her. "Have you? I have, Hon!"

She had, suddenly, tears in her eyes. "I could always lean on you," she told him. "You never got discouraged when I did; you could always chirk me up when I needed it; and you always saw things the best way; and you were always wise when I needed wisdom, and patient when I needed patience most."

She laughed, with a sound like a sob. "It isn't just because I love you, Henry. You're a saint on earth, in so many ways."

He laughed and rose and caught her in his arms. "Good Lord," he protested. "That's no kind of talk from you, Hon!"

"Well, you are," she repeated; and wept frankly. Burst out then, in an angry tone, "I'd like to tell Mr. Pearce a few things. They don't appreciate you; that's the trouble, Henry! Putting a man like you in the reference department!"

"It's no disgrace, Shirley," Henry assured her. "I didn't mean to make you think I thought that. It only struck me, the fact that I'd gone round the circle and come back where I started. Plugged along thirty years and ended just where I began."

"You haven't ended!" she cried bitterly.

"Oh, I know," he agreed. "I didn't mean that. But I've found my level, Shirley. That's the way it looks to me. I've come back where I belong. Routine work. Like a clerk. I don't mind. Of course, I used to plan a lot of things I was going to do; but I know now I'll never do them."

She laughed at him through her tears. "Boy, you'll be as full as ever of plans, in a day or two."

He shook his head. "No, I guess I'm settled. The excitement's all over, Hon! It's youth that sees visions in the future. We old folk dream dreams of the past; that's all. I'm not rebellious; I'm just—kind of reconciled."

"Well, you have a right to be reconciled," she declared then. "And proud. You've always worked honestly and hard, and you've always been fine to me, and you've never hurt

anyone in your life, and you've made friends and kept them. . . ."

"I remember I used to think Sam Russell and I would always be friends," he said, smiling sorrowfully. "And Dave Pell. I've gone ahead of Sam, in some ways, Shirley; but Dave had a start on me."

She said rebelliously: "I guess the Herricks are as fine as the Pells ever were. I'm always so proud of you when we're over there!"

He grinned. "I'm always trying to keep my shirt from bulging when I'm there," he amended. "That's the difference between me and Mr. Herrick! He lets his bulge!"

She laughed at that, softly; touched his hand. "You're a dear, Henry."

He held to her fingers; but he was rather thinking aloud than talking to her. "This is a milestone, in a way. When I was a youngster, my thoughts were all what I was going to do. These last few years I've found myself saying, more and more, 'I remember.' There's a great difference, Hon, between 'I'm going to . . .' and 'I remember . . .'"

"You're forgetting one thing you like now to say," she suggested, smiling at him, and he asked:

"What do you mean?"

"You're always saying 'Dan's going to . . .' or Cynt's going to . . .' or 'Thad's going to . . .' now."

He laughed, with a swift happiness. "Well, of course that's true," he confessed. "But it's the same thing! Looking to the past, or watching someone else's achievements. That's old age, my dear."

"It's not someone else, when the children do things," she insisted. "It's you, Henry. They are you, going on, picking up where you have set them, starting with what you've given them." And she added thoughtfully: "It's easy to say you haven't got anywhere, haven't got anything out of life. But you aren't a getter, Henry. You're a giver. You don't gather in, you distribute; you don't acquire, you share. You've given them what they are."

He laughed at her gently. "How about you?" he protested.

"You and I," she agreed, readily enough. "We're both together in this. If life's over for you, Henry, then it's over for me."

He said at last: "I guess you're right, in a way. It's not over for either of us—long as we have to keep an eye on the children; long as we can watch them get along."

2

Hours later—they had talked for long, and Shirley was drowsing, while he sat beside her bed—he spoke suddenly, after some silence. "Asleep, Hon?"

"No, no," she murmured. "No. What is it, dear?"

"You know, Dan and I've been talking a lot about all this law-breaking and that sort of thing," he reminded her.

"Yes," she assented. "Yes, I know."

"I've been thinking," he explained eagerly. "This new work will give me more time. I think I'll try and write a novel about that, Shirley, and work in the automobile laws, and prohibition, and the war, and all. I'll bet I could do something with that idea."

She smiled sleepily; and without opening her eyes, she reached out and caught his hand. "I know you can, Henry," she agreed.

When he went at last to his own room, he was full of this new project, his despair forgotten. It was always easier for Henry to look ahead.

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